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A WEST POINT YEARLING

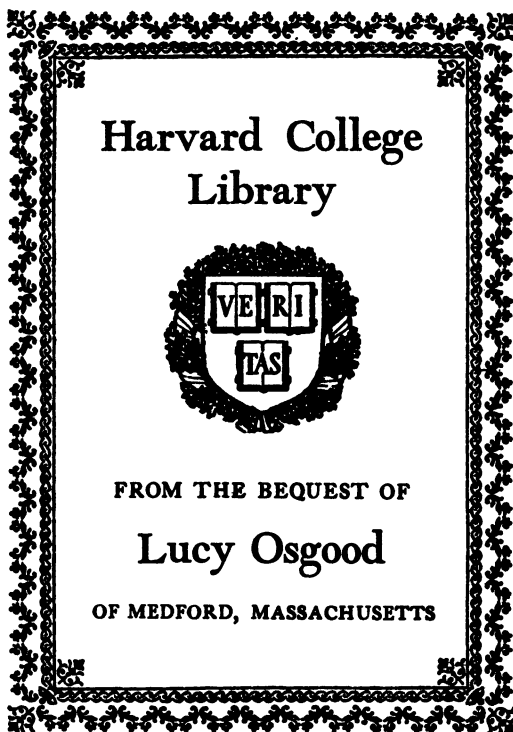


CAPTAIN
PAUL B. MALONE
U.S. ARMY



Jul 1911.58

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John Seabury Hathaway





**"HIVED HIM COLD," WAS
THE ANSWER**



A WEST POINT YEARLING

By
Capt. Paul B. Malone
U. S. Army

Author of
Winning His Way to West Point
A Platoon at West Point
A West Point Cadet
A West Point Lieutenant

Illustrated by
F. A. CARTER

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Introduction

DURING the period covered by this volume hazing had become a serious menace to the discipline of the Military Academy. The efforts on the part of the authorities to suppress the vice met with but little co-operation from the cadets who believed that no plebe could be inspired with the proper sense of instantaneous obedience except by the so-called system of hazing which had been practised for many years at the Academy.

So strong, honest and deep-seated was this belief that the cadet who opposed it was subject to suspicion as a sycophant and "boot-lick."

Among the opponents of the system, however, was Douglas Atwell, president of the yearling class, a recognized and stalwart leader among his comrades. In these pages an effort is made to trace his struggle against the growing opposition of his class; in a word, to follow out the system of hazing to its logical consequences.

light upon its surface vanishing as it ran into the bluffs of Newburgh, where Washington once held his headquarters. Here was the scene of some of the greatest affairs in the history of the young nation; here invading armies were checked, hostile fleets were barred, and treason itself was baffled. The memory of these century-old events was alive in the sentry's mind as he gazed about him and thrilled with the thought of the valiant deeds enacted on this very spot. Now, as then, the only sound which met the listener's ear at night was that of the sentinels' tread as they drifted slowly along their posts beneath the oaks which surround the cadet encampment. Karl Krumms's eyes followed them entranced. At times they were totally lost to view; again, a bayonet flashed in the moonlight, and then the glistening white duck trousers and polished waist-plates of the cadet sentinels were clearly defined against the background of foliage and shadow.

Quite unconscious of his duty "to walk his post in a military manner," the sentinel on No. 1 had watched the fleeting figures for perhaps five minutes when he was suddenly stirred from his

reverie by a ponderous stroke from the tower clock in the Academic Building, recording the first half hour after taps. Then the sentry dropped down his rifle to the "port," and turning toward the guard-tent, called out in measured tones, "Half-past ten o'clock, and all is w-e-l-l."

The sentinels on post successively repeated the call until it had passed completely around camp, and then Karl Krumms confirmed the official assurance of security by the final report, "All 's w-e-l-l."

Never did a report seem more in harmony with the facts, yet the words had scarcely left the sentry's lips when a deafening explosion rang out through camp and a plebe sentinel almost screamed out his call, "The guard, Number 3! The g-u-ard, Number 3!"

Cadet Corporal Douglas Atwell, whose relief was on post, sprang from his chair in the guard-tent and snapped up his rifle from the gun-rack with the cry, "Fall in the guard." Even as the startled members of the guard jumped from the tent floors on which they had been sleeping, two more explosions occurred in rapid succession, and as the sparks shot high in the air over No. 3, a

second call came louder than the first: "The g-u-ar-d . . . Num—ber—"

"Fall in promptly!" commanded the corporal as he observed the significant interruption in the sentinel's call, and knew that things were happening to the plebe which demanded immediate intervention.

"Right face, forward, double time! March!" The detachment of the guard dashed at full speed in front of the guard-tent and turned down the gravel walk towards the scene where only a year before Douglas Atwell himself as a plebe sentinel knocked down an upper classman in the defense of his post. This conduct cost him a fight with Frank Hadley, the offended yearling, and the history of the "plebe's crushing defeat" of that excellent boxer and gymnast was still fresh in the memory of the corps. The details of that fight were fresh in the young corporal's mind also as he rushed along number three's post and eagerly looked for the sentinel.

"Hardin, where is the plebe who called for the guard?" shouted Douglas to the sentinel on No. 4 as he reached the end of the post and found it unguarded.

"Don't know," said Hardin sullenly, as he faced about and walked down his post. "I don't happen to be interested in the welfare of plebe sentinels."

Without replying to Hardin's surly remark, Douglas whirled about and started back along the vacant post in search of the plebe whose call had startled camp.

The disturbance had completely subsided, and the perpetrators of this outrage against discipline had disappeared like a mist before the rising sun, while the remnants of three giant firecrackers lying on the post revealed the harmless character of the explosions that had occurred—but the plebe was gone, and the camp was again as serene and calm as when Karl Krumms stood contemplating the splendors of the night just before the stroke of half-past ten.

The sound of a rapid foot step and the clink of a sword brought Douglas about with the sharp challenge, "Halt! Who 's there?"

"The officer of the day," came the answer.

"Advance, officer of the day, to be recognized," and the tall figure of Cadet Captain Townsend appeared at the head of the company street.

"What is the matter, Atwell?" said the officer of the day as he was recognized.

"I heard three shots, sir, giant firecrackers apparently, followed by Mr. Lumley's call for the guard. I came down to the post at double time, but Mr. Lumley is nowhere to be seen."

"Listen!" interrupted Townsend as a weak call came from the bottom of Fort Clinton ditch in the vicinity of the water tank, and in an instant both the officer of the day and the corporal of the guard were hurrying towards the origin of the sound.

Just opposite the water tank, where the shadows were deepest, Douglas stumbled upon the plebe's rifle standing upright, with the bayonet stuck into the ground, while down in the bottom of the Fort Clinton ditch, he beheld a most remarkable spectacle.

A huge sugar barrel was rocking violently back and forth, muffled sounds were issuing from within, and from the open end Mr. Lumley's legs were protruding and threshing about in a violent effort to escape from the encircling coils of a rope.

"Steady, Mr. Lumley, steady, sir," said Townsend, as he and Douglas seized the barrel and

pulled the frantic plebe to a sitting position, "what do you mean by being found off your post in a sugar barrel, sir? Sit still, and stop that growling while Mr. Atwell digs you out, sir."

But this was no easy matter, for the barrel was gripping Mr. Lumley's huge frame like the "shrunk-on" jacket of a field-gun, and all efforts to release him were in vain. It was indeed a ludicrous spectacle, but Douglas restrained all disposition to laugh, for he had won his cadetship by gallant services in the ranks of the regular army and all his training had taught him to intensely resent any interference with a sentinel on post. Moreover, the situation was most serious, for the consequences of this night's escapade would be fatal to any cadet found implicated, and Douglas felt that in his own class would be found the guilty parties. It was necessary to get the plebe back upon his post with all possible despatch and thus save some reckless hazer from a punishment he richly merited.

Placing his foot on the big plebe's leg, Douglas once more seized the lower edge of the barrel and threw all his strength into the lift. This time it yielded to his efforts and as the barrel shot up into

the air Douglas turned towards the sound of an approaching footstep and beheld Captain Barton, the officer in charge.

The explosion had awakened this officer, who is responsible for the discipline of camp, and from his tent he had watched the operations of the cadet officer of the day and the young corporal of the guard.

"Get up, Mr. Lumley," said Captain Barton sharply, "and tell me what happened on your post."

As the big plebe stumbled to his feet, the moonlight fell upon him, revealing his head encased in two huge pillows which were held fast by a small rope. Seizing the end of the latter, Douglas jerked it loose and the pillows fell to the ground, freeing the sadly-bewildered plebe, who stood awkwardly at attention and squared back his shoulders.

"Take up your rifle and resume your post, sir," said Captain Barton, with a slight tone of impatience, for Mr. Lumley was the biggest man in the plebe class and his failure to properly defend his post was treated with but slight indulgence by his superior officer.

"Remain here, Mr. Townsend and Mr. At-

well," added the captain as the group mounted to the plebe's deserted post, "but send the detachment back to the guard-tent." Then as the members of the guard marched away along the post, the captain turned to the dilapidated plebe, who waited humbly at the "port" to be questioned by the officer in charge.

"Now inform me in detail, Mr. Lumley, as to what happened on your post."

"I was just walking along here, sir, under the trees, sir," said the big plebe in an apologetic tone, "and I did n't see any one, sir. All of a sudden, sir, some one snapped my rifle off my shoulder, and before I knew what happened a pillow was jammed into my face and a rope pulled around it, sir. I yelled for the guard, sir, and hit out right and left, but I only struck that tree, I guess, sir. Then I stuck down my head, sir, and made a jump to get away, but some one slapped a barrel over my head, sir, and I guess I ran into a tree and jammed my head clean up to the bottom of the barrel, sir. All the time firecrackers were exploding around my feet, sir, and then some one slung a rope around my legs, upset me, and gave me a heave, sir, and I rolled down into the ditch."

"Well, who did it?"

"I don't know, sir, it was all so quick I could n't see, sir, but th' must have been about ten of them."

"Why?"

"Because just a few of them could n't handle me like—"

"You have no idea of the men who threw you into the ditch?" interrupted Captain Barton impatiently, for the boastful manner of the plebe even after his humiliating experience was exceedingly distasteful to the young officer.

"I got no idea at all, sir."

"You did n't even see towards what tents they went?"

"No, sir."

"Then walk your post and don't ever again allow yourself to be caught unawares. It is the duty of a sentinel to see, and to defend his post," and with these sharp words Captain Barton turned away. "That is all, Mr. Townsend," he added, "Mr. Atwell, come with me."

Then Captain Barton picked up the two pillows and walked slowly down No. 3 to the path which leads to the line of officers' tents, and Douglas followed, scarcely knowing what to expect. Ever

since his arrival at the academy, a little more than a year ago, he had been a member of the company commanded by Captain Barton, and it was partly upon the recommendation of the latter that he had secured his chevrons as a cadet corporal at the end of plebe year. Moreover, the young corporal of the guard had served as a soldier of Company M, —th Infantry through the great campaign against Aguinaldo, and for his conspicuous gallantry on the field of battle he had been granted a cadetship at large to the Military Academy. Though Captain Barton had not been present during this campaign, yet it was in his company that Douglas had won his honors, and now on the occasion of his first service under Captain Barton's direct supervision, a plebe sentinel of his relief had been outrageously hazed on post in violation of the regulations of the Military Academy and the express orders of the superintendent.

Captain Barton stopped abruptly in front of his tent and turned toward Douglas.

"What do you know of this piece of hazing to-night, Mr. Atwell?" asked the captain sharply.

"Nothing at all," said Douglas, "except what

Mr. Lumley reported to you, sir. The post was clear when I reached it with a detachment of the guard and no one was in sight, sir."

"You saw no one?"

"No, sir."

"And have no idea as to the identity of the cadets who hazed Mr. Lumley?"

"No, sir."

"Is there any special reason why Mr. Lumley should have been made the victim to-night?"

"None, sir, except that he is known as a braggart and that he had been heard to say that he would run any upper classmen through with a bayonet if they attempted to haze him on post. This is his first night on guard and—"

"I see," interrupted Captain Barton meditatively as he folded his arms and looked out toward No. 5, where he, in his cadet days, had passed through the ordeal of his first guard tour and had learned in a never-to-be-forgotten manner some of the duties of watchfulness on post. By no duty had he been more thoroughly tried than by those nights and days of toil in plebe camp, and now, mellowed by the additional experience of ten years' arduous service, termina-

ting in the campaign in Cuba, he had been called back to the Military Academy as a tactical officer to assist the superintendent in this business of training cadets for the duties of their calling. Few were better fitted than he to meet the requirements of this office, for Captain Barton possessed the unusual quality of meeting a subordinate on his own level without lowering the standards of official propriety or permitting the slightest familiarity. It was in this rôle that he turned abruptly to Douglas.

“Mr. Atwell, you are president of your class, and your attitude on hazing must exercise a great influence with your comrades. To-night we have had an illustration of the vice in one of its worst forms—interference with a sentinel on post, and it is needless to say that any cadet found implicated in the matter will be dismissed from the service. The superintendent is determined to break up the vicious forms of hazing, and both he and the tactical officers must look to the best minds in the corps for the support of his policy.

“I have followed your career both in the army and in the academy with considerable interest, and it is my judgment that you will use all honor-

able means to sustain the orders of your superior officers. These escapades must be stopped at any cost. I will ask you no questions as to your attitude upon the subject, but will merely assure you that I do not think my confidence in you has been misplaced. That is all, Mr. Atwell."

Douglas's hand rose sharply to his rifle in response to Captain Barton's salute and he faced about and walked rapidly down the gravel walk towards the guard-tent, the words still ringing in his ears like the notes of a keen-toned bell. For weeks he had pondered over the attitude which fidelity to both the academy and his class required him to assume, but the events of the evening had forced him to a final decision. The hazing of a plebe on post in direct defiance of the superintendent's orders was an offense he could not tolerate, while the words of Captain Barton made it impossible to wear the chevrons of a cadet corporal and yet yield but a lukewarm support to the authority which conferred them.

Erect, alert, and eager, he was turning back to the guard-tent, resolved to comply to the fullest with the will of his superiors. He had not gone ten paces from Captain Barton's tent when a re-

port rolled out like a peal of thunder across the plain and sent its reverberations leaping from crag to crag along the broken hill-tops of old West Point.

The reveille gun had been fired.

"Hurry to the guard-tent, Mr. Atwell," said Captain Barton in sharp commanding tones, "and tell the orderly who has just gone down there to sound the long roll. Tell the officer of the guard to double the sentinels on post immediately, and personally use your utmost endeavor to prevent all persons from entering or leaving camp."

"Very well, sir," said Douglas, as he saluted and then dashed down the company street as fast as his athletic young legs could carry him. Already the guard was forming under the orders of the officer of the guard, and Douglas rushed to one of the tents and brought the sleepy orderly to his feet.

"Sound the long roll by order of Captain Barton," he shouted into the orderly's face, supplementing his words with a strenuous shake.

The startled youngster snapped up his drumsticks and began to rattle off that terrifying roll

which has brought the chill to the heart of many a sleepy soldier on an early morning battle-field, while Douglas rushed to the officer of the guard with the order to double the sentinels on post and capture any person attempting to leave or enter camp.

"All right," said Hacker, gruffly, as he heard the order, "you take a detachment of the guard and look out for the south side, and Marley, you post them on the north side of camp."

Almost before the words were spoken Douglas was away at a double time with his section of the guard. Scarcely waiting to respond to the challenge of sentries, he raced along Nos. 6, 5, and 4, dropping an additional sentinel at each post, and then paused breathless at the end of his line. Candle lights were blazing and spluttering in every tent and over the noise of the awakened camp came the repeated orders of the first sergeants to "fall in." So prompt had been the response to the orders of the officer in charge that nothing could save the cadet who had dared to add the firing of the reveille gun to the other mischief of the night. In a moment the companies would be in line, the rolls would be called, and the absentees, if any, would be reported to the officer

in charge. It was Douglas Atwell's business to see that no one rushed the line of sentinels' posts and gained the interior of camp without authority.

Douglas was slowly returning along his posts, ardently hoping that fate would impose no ugly duty upon him, when his heart leaped as he suddenly beheld a flash of gray emerge from behind the field guns parked on the south side of camp. With head thrown back and hat off, a cadet was running at terrific speed for camp.

"Halt!" shouted Douglas as he sprang down the post, "sentinel, halt that man!"

"Halt! Halt!" cried the plebe sentinel on post as with lowered bayonet he attempted to stop the flying figure.

In an instant both the plebe and the runner disappeared within the shadows of the overhanging trees. Then there was a crash, and the plebe rolled headlong as the gray figure leaped again into the moonlight and plunged beneath the tent flaps at the rear of D company. The lights within the tent were smothered in a twinkling, and the rapid patter of feet in the darkness indicated that the runner was safe.

Douglas had been too far away to reach the

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scene in time, but he had done his very best to loyally carry out the orders that he had received, and as he turned back down the post towards the guard-tent he could not resist the hope that the gray runner had escaped detection and had reached his company in time for inspection. For a moment he stood on No. 2, listened to the first sergeants calling their rolls and saw the final report made to the officer in charge. Then he turned back to the guard-tent.

"Did they hive the man who was out of camp?" he asked anxiously, as he met Sam Smoke, a class-mate, returning from the direction of camp.

"Hived him cold," was the answer in a tone of unmistakable exultation.

"Who was it?"

"Rory O'Connor, your tent-mate. They also found a dummy in his bed to deceive the Tac, if he made an inspection."

CHAPTER II

THE DUMMY IN RODERICK O'CONNOR'S BED



NOTHING could exceed Douglas Atwell's surprise and chagrin at the receipt of the information that the cadet whom he had tried so hard to capture at the line of sentinels' posts was his best friend and tent-mate, Roderick O'Connor. Fifteen minutes before this occurrence, no argument would have convinced him that Roderick could be guilty of such a breach of discipline. To fire the reveille gun in utter contempt of regulations, and then to knock down a sentinel and force his way across his post, betrayed an astounding lack of consideration for military propriety, but to place a dummy in his bed to deceive a superior officer—this was conduct unbecoming a cadet and gentleman.

Douglas stood alone in the dark in the rear of the guard-tent where no inquisitive eye might see

him as these thoughts rushed like hot flames through his brain. To him, Roderick O'Connor had been a friend whose fidelity had never faltered. On that anxious day in the preceding June when he reported as a friendless candidate at the Military Academy, Roderick was the first member of his class to form his acquaintance and claim his fellowship. He had volunteered his time and the best efforts of his brain to assist his new-found friend in the preparation for the entrance examination for which Douglas was but poorly equipped. As tent-mates, they had passed together through the ordeals of plebe camp, and in his fight with Frank Hadley of the yearling class, Roderick had been our young friend's second and counselor. On the football-field they had won their first plebe honors side by side, and throughout that long year of fearful struggle in the academic departments, Douglas felt that he had been saved from failure and final discharge from the academy only by the faithful, loyal, and ever-willing assistance of his generous classmate. In the close intimacy of this period of extreme trial, there had sprung up between these two young men a loyal affection which would en-

ture when the memory of battle-fields would perish; yet in spite of all this, Douglas was now in honor bound to do nothing which would shield his friend from disgrace.

No anguish of spirit that he had suffered in his efforts to accomplish the almost impossible mental tasks of the preceding year could equal the torture of this moment as he stood alone in the darkness and tugged at the tent cords. Within, the voice of Hacker, the officer of the guard, came sharply to his ears. "I 'm sorry for Rory O'Connor, for he 's a fine chap, but that obstreperous youngster, Atwell, is to blame for the whole affair. He 's like a wolf-hound on the trail of his quarry. They say he practically ran O'Connor down, or at any rate pursued so closely that Captain Barton made the capture without trouble. It 's all right for a Tac. to show such zeal, but it 's contemptible for a cadet to hound down a class-mate. I 've seen men cut for less."

Douglas turned away that he might hear no more. Out on No. 1 Karl Krumms was pacing slowly up and down his post, while across the plain the moonlight revealed a tall figure approaching the camp. Karl challenged and Doug-

las's heart leaped as he heard the answer, "The commandant of cadets." Having heard the roar of the reveille gun he had come to camp to investigate the matter, and it was clear that Roderick would suffer the full penalty of this reckless escapade

Such an offense always merited drastic treatment, but at this particular period in the history of the academy it required especial severity. That very night while the corps stood in the long gray ranks at parade, Cadet-Adjutant Maitland had read an order from the superintendent reducing Cadet Lieutenant Harrison to the grade of private, confining him to camp until the 28th of August, and requiring him to walk tours of extra duty every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon for the same period—all for a very slight but improper interference with the rights of a plebe. And in a further stinging reprimand to Cadet Harrison, the superintendent had dilated upon just such other breaches of discipline as Roderick O'Connor had now apparently committed. To ignore such a warning was to invite a punishment which might wreck a career.

In the full realization of all this, and conscious

of the unfortunate rôle he had played in the case, Douglas watched the commandant as he strode across the general parade and disappeared in the direction of Captain Barton's tent. Then he walked slowly back to the guard-tent in which he had been sitting when the alarm on No. 3 started him to his feet and brought him leaping down upon the sentinel's post.

Tossing his forage hat upon the grass, he dropped onto a camp-stool, turning his back to, the pole in order that Hacker, the officer of the guard, might discover in his face nothing of the anxiety he was suffering. Behind the glistening tent tops on No. 3, he could see Mr. Lumley slowly pacing his post and glancing furtively to the front and rear, and the young corporal's thoughts turned instantly back to that night in his plebe camp when the yearlings, led by Frank Hadley, attempted to do with him what had been so easily done with Mr. Lumley to-night. In his mind's eye he saw the results of that attempt—Frank Hadley knocked half unconscious across his post by a blow from the butt of his rifle, the rest of the yearlings held at bay at the point of his dancing bayonet. Behind the bastioned front

of old Fort Clinton now looming darkly behind the glistening white, he fought his first plebe fight as a result of the challenge which followed the affair on post. In imagination the boy again lived through those terrific rounds which, at the end, found him battered and bleeding, yet victor, over Frank Hadley, the strongest boxer in the yearling class. In defense of the same principles which he defended then, Douglas hoped that he would not be called upon now to meet another antagonist in the roped arena. But if this must be the outcome of his effort to do a manifest duty, then he would not shrink from the task, even if it cost him his dearest friend and his good standing with the corps of cadets.

Such had been the guiding principle in Douglas Atwell's remarkable career. Inheriting a love for the military, he had sought the first possible opportunity to serve his country, and so the outbreak of the Insurrection in the Philippines found him a private in the ranks of Company M, —th Infantry, an organization destined to play an important and gallant rôle in the great campaign against Aguinaldo. As a recruit of but three days' experience, he saw the first hostile shots

flash out in the night across the San Juan River bridge, and the next day in the never-to-be-forgotten charge on Blockhouse No. 14, he won the respect and esteem of his whole company. Through the jungles of bamboo and nipa, beneath the blistering tropical sun of Luzon, he served with such conspicuous gallantry as to win a presidential appointment to the U. S. Military Academy. Arriving thereat, he was startled to find as a room-mate and class-mate, the very man who had striven to ruin his reputation in the ranks, who had, he thought, been false to his flag. The old animosity was awakened, the old struggle renewed, and had it not been for the friendship of Roderick O'Connor, Douglas would have been forced from the academy in disgrace, the victim of a carefully laid plot by his old-time enemy. But Roderick saved him, and the desertion of Jackson and Storms, the two conspirators, closed the history of a most turbulent year. And now poor Roderick; what would be his fate?

As these events passed in review before the boy's excited mind, a thought made his heart leap with a new hope and he sprang to his feet with a half-suppressed cry.

"The watch-dog has scented more trouble," muttered the officer of the guard, for Hacker was one of those unfortunate cadets who look with contempt and suspicion upon all who faithfully execute an order which is disagreeable to the corps. Douglas noted the glance, but he did not catch the words; even had he heard them, however, it was no time to resent an insult, for Hacker was his superior officer in the execution of a most important duty, and any private grievance might be settled later according to the code of the corps. Moreover, the business of the moment absorbed his attention. Snatching his rifle from the arm-rack, he turned sharply toward No. 1.

"Karl," said he earnestly, as soon as he had been "advanced," "did you hear who was hived crossing No. 5 to-night?"

"No," said Karl, "who was it?"

"Roderick O'Connor."

"What!" gasped Karl, "Rory O'Connor?"

"Yes, it was Rory, Karl, and I am told that he placed a dummy in his bed to deceive the Tac. I have no time to talk the thing over, but it looks queer, Karl, and we don't want to take any

chances. Use your utmost endeavor to stop any one who attempts to cross your post, and see that the plebe who was doubled up with you understands his duty."

"All right, Douglas, you can depend upon me," said Karl warmly as Douglas dashed away toward No. 6.

In quick, sharp phrases the young corporal of the guard gave the same orders to the adjacent sentinels and hurried on to make the complete circuit of camp. He had arrived at No. 5 and stood rapidly instructing a very stupid plebe, when he heard the familiar challenge on No. 4, "Halt! Who's there?"

The challenge of a sentinel on post is too common an occurrence to attract even the most casual attention, yet the voice from the darkness startled the corporal of the guard like an electric shock. In an instant he had turned the corner of No. 4 and was hurrying down toward Hardin, whose big figure was scarcely visible in the deep blackness of the shadows across his post.

"Why did you challenge?" demanded Douglas as he faced his class-mate.

"Because I thought I saw some one," said Har-

Hardin sullenly, as he scowled down upon Douglas over the barrel of his rifle.

"Who was it?"

"I don't know."

"Did you stop him?"

"No."

"Why did n't you?"

The friendly tone of class-mate to class-mate was entirely gone from the young corporal's voice as he severely demanded an explanation of this failure to perform a manifest duty.

"Why did n't you stop the man?" again demanded Douglas, and his manner was that of an upper classman to a plebe, but Hardin stood silent and sullen, nervously shifting his rifle about in his trembling hands.

"There is a way to make you answer that question, Hardin," said Douglas as he turned away, "and I will make you answer it." Then he tossed his rifle to his shoulder and walked back to the guard-tent. The moment had passed and further instruction to the sentinels was useless.

It was now nearly eleven o'clock, and Hacker was at the desk making out his guard report, while on the opposite side of the tent sat Cadet

Captain Townsend with his unfinished delinquency list lying open before him. On the following day at parade, this list of the failures, neglects, oversights, and other shortcomings of the corps of cadets would be read out in public by the cadet adjutant, and for each such delinquency of a serious character the cadet must submit a written explanation to the commandant of cadets.

Tossing his rifle back into the gun-rack, Douglas stepped into the guard-tent. "I would like to submit a report," said he as he tore a sheet from a pad and wrote the following across it: "Hardin.—Being a sentinel on No. 4, did fail, at about 10:45 p. m., to prevent a party from entering camp across his post."—Atwell.

Hacker gripped the tip of his pen between his teeth as the slip of paper was laid before him, but Douglas turned without a word and left the tent. Failure to record that report would entail consequences which even dare-devil Hacker knew better than to risk. But how would the yearling class look upon the report and upon Atwell's conduct toward a class-mate? "Well, let the class do as it likes," mused Douglas as he emerged from the tent and beheld a column marching in

cadenced tread across the parade. It had been ordered out by the officer in charge to form the second and third reliefs of double sentinels around camp and to remain on duty all night.

Douglas flushed as he saw it, for this was the first fruit of Rory O'Connor's foolish act and an indication of the gravity with which the offense was considered. The affair with Hardin was causing him some concern, but the thought of disgrace for Roderick was giving him positive anguish. Again and again he asked himself: "What ever induced the faithful old fellow to stoop to the dishonorable act of putting a dummy in his bed to deceive a Tac.?"

It must have been a strong motive indeed, he told himself, yet in the close intimacy of their life in barracks and camp, Douglas had heard his tent-mate express no thought which would lead him to expect the reckless escapade of this night. The fact that Sam Smoke was the man who conveyed this ugly bit of information added a new bitterness to the situation, for Smoke had been the friend and ally of Douglas Atwell's arch enemy during the preceding year, and Douglas had avoided an open rupture with him only by

the exercise of much patience and diplomacy. But the time for patience and diplomacy had passed. By "skinning"¹ Hardin for his neglect of duty on post, Douglas had severed all friendly relations and must stand prepared to meet Hardin and Smoke at no distant date.

Turning these thoughts over again and again in his mind, Douglas sat alone upon a camp-stool almost unconscious of the passing of time until the tolling of the tower clock recalled him to his surroundings.

It was midnight, and Marley's relief was already falling in to go on post. Douglas seized his rifle and stepped into his place. The relief having been inspected by the officer of the guard, Marley saluted and turned to his command: "Right Face! Forward March!"

Like a perfect machine the relief moved off in silence and halted at the challenge of No. 2. Then Douglas and Marley moved forward and heard the new sentinel receive his orders and instructions from the old and then march away, leaving an anxious plebe behind to do his first duty on a midnight post. The other sentinels were re-

¹"Skinning."—Reporting a delinquency.

lieved in succession and Douglas dismissed his little command in front of the guard-tent. The tired men turned silently toward the tents to get a few hours of much-needed rest, and Douglas tossed his bedding on the bare floor of one of these and dropped wearily upon his blankets. He would not be called upon again for duty until 4:00 a. m., for Marley's tour extended from 12:00 to 2:00, and Barrett followed from 2:00 until 4:00. Thus nearly four hours were available for the only period of sleep during the entire tour of a guard.

No article of clothing or equipment could be removed, and all the members of the guard must be prepared to fall into ranks at a moment's notice upon the approach of an inspecting officer. Douglas shifted his cartridge-box and bayonet scabbard to a position of least discomfort on his side, placed his hat and gloves within easy reach, and then stretched at full length upon his blankets. He had scarcely finished his arrangements when a light step was heard in front of his tent and he recognized the fine, erect figure of Marley, whose relief had just gone on post.

"Oh, Douglas," said he in a low tone, as he thrust his head beneath the tent flap.

"Hello, Marley," said Douglas, rising upon his elbow, "come in."

"Have you time for a little talk?"

"Certainly, my time is always at your disposal, Marley."

"Thank you, but with less than four hours' sleep I can't imagine any one keen for a talk. I would not have disturbed you, but I felt that I could n't let the matter go until reveille."

Marley had pulled a camp-stool alongside of Douglas's pillow and was now bending over him so that his low-spoken words would not disturb the tired fellows who lay in the adjacent tent.

"The things that happened to-night will probably bring on a crisis," continued Marley, "and it is time we began to pull together and to decide on our course. As president of the class you will be called upon to adopt a policy and I miss my guess if you have not already decided what you are going to do."

It was the moment which Douglas had dreaded ever since the beginning of yearling year, but he had irrevocably committed himself and there was no honorable means of escape.

"Yes, I 've decided," he said, with an effort.

"And what is your decision, may I ask?" said Marley, eagerly.

"To live strictly up to the duty imposed on a cadet officer, no matter how disagreeable it may be."

"Good," said Marley, "it will be hard going, but that 's my road too. The hazing question is going to be settled right here in this camp and our class is going to split on the subject. The first class is already divided and feeling is running high. I 'm neither a plebe jumper nor a plebe lover. I came to the academy with utterly false ideas of my proper place and I 'm thankful to the cadet officers who took all the conceit out of me."

"Exactly," said Douglas, "I learned my lesson too and I 'm glad of it. Discipline can't be too strict for a plebe, but I can see no good in mere persecution. The plebes in our class who resented discipline the most are now the leaders in the hazing business. A worthless plebe always makes a brutal yearling. I thoroughly agree with you—it is time for us to pull together and prevent a repetition of this business on No. 3 to-night."

"There 'll be trouble on account of the stand,

Douglas, but I 'm with you," said Marley enthusiastically as he rose, "but I won't keep you any longer from your beauty-sleep, so good-night. Thank you for the talk."

But Douglas was thoroughly awake and anxious. He was glad to be committed to a definite policy, but the very first person to suffer from a resolution to follow it would be Rory O'Connor, the man to whom he owed his very existence as a cadet. To live up to an exalted standard of discipline was highly commendable, but how about disloyalty to a friend? The thought made the perspiration stand out on the lad's forehead and kept his eyes staring wide open and sleepless.

Two o'clock came and he heard Barrett march his relief past the tent to replace Marley's men on post. Again he heard the sentinel's call, "Half-past two o'clock, and all 's well." Then followed a period of profound, delicious sleep until he was started by the gentle tugging of someone at his elbow and heard the words, "Get up, Atwell, and get your relief ready."

It was ten minutes to four. Snatching up his gloves and hat, Douglas hastened to the guard-tent and below the dull, yellow glow of the gas-

jet scanned the list of his men. Then he cautiously awakened each, and at four sharp he marched again down the gravel post along which Sherman, Sheridan, Grant, Lee, Jackson, Scott, Longstreet, and all the other great men of the academy had marched as humble plebes in the ranks and had thus learned the first great lessons of silence, duty, and fortitude.

The thought set his shoulders erect, quickened his heart and sent the blood leaping through his veins. The future presented difficulties, to be sure, but he had known nothing else but difficulties since the day his father died and left him, at the age of five years, a penniless orphan on a ruined farm. In the face of obstacles which would have crushed the spirit of nearly any lad, he had won his way to a position of honor and trust, and through the principles which had triumphed over the adversity of the past he resolved to struggle with the conditions of the future.

Above the green-clad slopes of the Highlands the sun was touching the sky with the first golden flush of dawn, when Douglas Atwell's little command halted machine-like in front of the guard-

tent and dropped their rifles to the order with the precision of a clock-stroke.

"Fall out, take in your bedding and get ready for reveille," said Douglas, and nothing in his keen, alert manner would suggest the fact that he had slept but an hour and a quarter and had rested scarcely at all during his tour of guard.

Dropping his well-polished rifle, the beautiful weapon which had won first plebe colors in the preceding camp, he gathered up his bedding and at five o'clock turned toward camp. Reaching his tent, he found Roderick sound asleep, his fine, handsome head thrown back upon his arm with muscles like bands of steel—the muscles that had carried the West Point colors across gallant old Yale's goal line in the last foot-ball game between the two institutions. As Douglas looked at his tent-mate a wave of confidence swept over him—Roderick could never do a dishonorable thing.

Cautiously he crept about the tent and with quick, dexterous fingers began his morning shave. Then the soiled linen and smeared waist belts were replaced from his stock of spotless white and the tarnished waist-plate was polished until it shone like pure gold, and in his new blouse

and immaculate white duck trousers, Douglas was ready to return to the guard-tent when Rory awoke.

"Hello, Dug," said he rubbing his eyes, "Jove, you look spoony. I 'm willing to spoon up for a hop but it needs paroxysms of enthusiasm such as yours to make a man spoon before reveille. It makes me gasp sometimes to think what might happen should you ever turn post spoonoid."¹ and Rory ran his fingers through his curly black hair and chuckled so happily that no one could imagine him the object of a moment's anxiety.

Douglas was frantic to know why Roderick had involved himself in a disgraceful affair, and his impatience with any form of frivolity was expressed in his face as he looked sternly down upon his tent-mate.

"Well, old Rain-in-the-Face, I see that you are demanding an apology for my conduct last night," and Rory chuckled again. "Never ran so hard in my life, Dug, honest I never did, and I bet that blessed plebe you had out there knows what it feels like to try stopping a foot-ball player running for a touch-down. But 'Old Ironsides'

¹ "Post spoonoid."—A cadet who seeks social success among the ladies of the post.

(Captain Barton) was Johnny-on-the-Spot, so I will languish in con.¹ for the rest of camp."

"Why did you do it?" demanded Douglas, impatiently.

"Do it? Great Jehoshaphat! Did you think I was going to tarry outside when I heard the drums a-callin' and rec'lected that I had an engagement to keep?"

"I don't mean that," said Douglas. "Why did you fire the reveille gun?"

"I did n't fire the reveille gun."

"You did n't!" exclaimed Douglas in delight and surprise. "Then why did you put a dummy in your bed to deceive the Tac.?"

Rory sat bolt upright.

"I did n't put the dummy in my bed at all. When I found it there the thought flashed into my mind that you had discovered my absence from camp, and that in a moment of anxiety for my safety you had foolishly put it there yourself, so I refused point blank to say a word when Captain Barton questioned me. It's a great relief to know that you did n't do it, but now the question is, who put that dummy in my bed?"

¹ For breaches of discipline, cadets are confined to the limits of camp and are then said to be in "confinement," or in "con."

CHAPTER III

THE INVESTIGATION



THE crash of the reveille gun cut short the conversation between Douglas and his tent-mate, but the few hurried words that had passed between them clearly revealed the fact that Roderick was free from all taint upon his character as a cadet and gentleman. The thought made Douglas nearly shout with joy as he hurried back to the guard-tent to fall in for reveille formation. After all, the lad's zeal in the execution of duty would bring no shame or disgrace to a beloved friend and benefactor, and Douglas felt sure that Roderick would suffer his punishment, no matter how severe, without the slightest show of resentment.

The rattling music of the fife and drum corps rolled out over camp and the stars and stripes rose majestically above the tree-tops to the pinnacle of the flag-staff as Douglas reached the

guard-tent. It was 5:10 a. m. and a new day was dawning for the U. S. Corps of Cadets, an important day in the life of Douglas Atwell. In a few moments the formerly quiet camp was converted into a scene of intense activity. Young men who as private citizens deemed a half hour all too short a time for rising and dressing in the morning, were now accomplishing the same results in ten minutes. As the drummers rattled off assembly at the end of that period, the ranks in each company fell into place in perfect order and the guard came to rigid attention at the word of its commander. Captain Barton received the salute and report of the guard, and then the ranks broke and the plebes hurried off to the guard-tents to secure brooms, etc., to police the grounds along the line of visitors' seats.

"Take charge of the policing, Atwell," yawned Hacker, as he turned into the guard-tent and sank sleepily into a camp-chair.

"Very well, sir," said Douglas, and at once deployed his plebes over the ground to be cleaned—to do the duty which Hacker himself should superintend.

Every bit of paper, every straw or scrap must

be carefully removed and the ground then swept or "dragged" with brooms until it was smooth as a parlor carpet, while the camp-stools, scattered about by the visitors of the preceding evening must be carried back to the guard-tent and piled in square, symmetrical heaps.

In any other educational institution in the country except the Naval Academy, hired laborers would perform this duty, but here at West Point, Cadet Corporal Douglas Atwell, the son of a poor farmer, commanded a police detail consisting of the sons of a major-general and of a bank-president, an ex-student in a theological seminary, an east-side Jew, a graduate of Yale, a farmer boy, and the son of the president of a Central American republic. But such was the discipline attained by less than one month's service at the Military Academy that no one for a moment questioned the propriety of the situation. Here all were reduced to a common level-plebe-dom; the right to preference could be established only by superior performance.

In the company streets the same duty was being performed in the same uniform manner under the energetic supervisions of yearling cor-

porals as diverse in their ancestral history as the squad commanded by Douglas Atwell. As the young corporal turned his eyes towards the busy workers, Maitland, the cadet adjutant, in full dress uniform and side-arms, walked rapidly into the company street. As if marching to the front and center at parade, his tall plume quivering and shimmering in the morning light, Maitland walked straight to Roderick O'Connor's tent, and Douglas heard his clear sharp words: "Stand at attention, O'Connor. The commandant directs me to inform you that you are hereby placed in arrest and will confine yourself to your tent until further orders."

"Very well, sir," said Roderick, and turning as abruptly as he had come, Maitland walked back to his tent.

Douglas drew in his breath anxiously as he watched the performance, for though Roderick was free from the most serious charge, he had yet to answer for being out of camp without authority, rushing a sentinel's post, and refusing to answer questions concerning the "dummy," and no one could guess what punishment might be awarded. This was no time for speculation, how-

ever—the facts in the case could be known only when the tour of guard was over and Douglas could hear the whole story from Roderick's own lips.

Tents had been swept, camp policed, and nearly every upper classman had taken his morning shave, when at 6:00 a. m. the battalion formed line in blouses and white duck trousers and marched away to breakfast at Grant Hall. Roderick, deprived of his command, was in the file-closers of his company, but when Douglas marched into the hall with a detachment of the guard and took his seat opposite to Rory at the table, the handsome fellow's face showed no indications of anxiety for the future.

"Just a joke, which some chap was trying to play on me, don't you know," said he mirthfully in answer to his classmates' eager questions about the "dummy," but in the look he flashed across the table to Douglas, the latter knew that Roderick had some mental reservations as to the character of the joke. It was clear, however, that no one believed Roderick guilty of any attempt to deceive and that he had lost none of his popularity by his daring escapade.

In regard to the hazing of Mr. Lumley on post Douglas was equally conservative, talking just enough to ascertain the fact that no one knew of the rebuke he had administered to Hardin or of the "skin" which would bring this matter to a crisis at evening parade.

Two affairs in one night were sufficient to raise interest to a high pitch, and so the big hall fairly roared with the noise of conversation until Cadet Captain Black walked around the room on his tour of table inspections and halting in the centre of the hall pealed out his command: "B and C companies, Rise!"

"A and D companies, Rise!"

Then the big battalion stepped into ranks in front of the Mess Hall and marched away like a living machine to the parade in front of camp.

Fifteen minutes later, the ranks were forming for the first drill of the day. Douglas watched the various detachments marching away to the manifold drills which occupy the life of a cadet, and eagerly waited for the time to pass when he might know the details concerning the "dummy" in Roderick's bed, and though he hoped that no

malicious hand had placed it there, yet every time he tried to solve the problem, his mind jumped instinctively back to the same thought which made him on the preceding night order the sentinels to watch for a party attempting to cross their post and which led to the clash with Hardin on No. 4.

"But Hardin will have to state in his official explanation why he failed to stop that man," mused Douglas, as he fiercely clutched his rifle and watched the orderly cinching up his drum to sound first call for guard mounting.

As if in response to his thoughts, Hardin and Smoke walked around the corner of the guard-tent, and Douglas met them face to face. Not a word was spoken, but in that fleeting exchange of glances a challenge was expressed and an acceptance returned.

The assembly sounded. Followed by the adoring gaze of a group of young ladies at the visitors' seats, Cadet Adjutant Maitland took his post in the center of the parade. The band struck up a thrilling march and in perfect cadence to the martial music the details swept out in succession from the company streets and halted on the line. In

the front rank were the yearlings, well-trained, and confident in their powers; in the rear rank the plebes, awkward, nervous and anxious, for these were their first tours on guard and no duty tries the mettle of the young soldier more. General Grant in his hardest campaign probably never suffered greater anxiety than on the occasion of his first tour of guard duty at West Point. Such too was the mental condition of these young soldiers of the republic as they passed through the minute inspection of the adjutant and officer of the guard, and the broke into column of platoons and swept past the officers of the day in review. Preceded by the field music they turned across No. 1, passed in front of the old guard, and halted in fine order on its right.

“Present Arms!”

The rifles rang in quick response to the command, and the swords of the officers of the guard flashed in the sunlight as they exchanged salutations. Then, preceded by the officers of the day in their red silk sashes and tall quivering plumes, Barrett marched off his relief. With the relief of Barrett's men on post responsibility ceased, and Hacker marched off his guard. The detach-

ments fell out and Douglas almost rushed to his tent.

Roderick was not there.

"He 's down at the commandant's tent," said Karl Krumms as he joined Douglas, equally eager to hear the story of the night in camp, for these three lads had been inseparable friends ever since the days of "beast barracks." "They tell me," continued Karl, "that an investigation is in progress and that Rory 's been on the rack ever since eight o'clock."

"On the rack is gentle language, boys," laughed Rory, as he stepped into the tent and mopped his troubled brow. "Great Jehoshaphat! How the Com. did roast me! I feel as if I 'd been in a crematory."

"How did you come out?" asked Douglas eagerly.

"I can't exactly remember," said Rory tragically, "but I think it was through the chimney. I tell you I have been incinerated. I 'm ashes or other equally humble refuse."

"Did you find out what they are going to do with you?" said Karl.

"Well," said Rory, folding his arms, "my

present status continues to be arrest, while the Com. insinuates the loss of my chevrons, and a possible court-martial in the near future."

"What did he ask you?" said Douglas.

"Various embarrassing questions, among them why I was out of camp last night, why the reveille gun was fired, why a plebe was hazed and why a dummy was found in my bed. Well, I didn't want to tell the Com. anything he did n't already know for fear that he might acquire some very uncomfortable facts to use on the next victim. So I just dipped into the English language with a bucket and flooded the tent with meaningless words. I tried to drown the issue in a sea of phrases, but the Com. would n't have it, so I finally assured him that I knew nothing about the hazing of Mr. Lumley, that I did n't fire the reveille gun, that I was out of camp, but begged to be excused from saying why—for boys, I could n't; I could n't even tell you," and Roderick lay back in his camp-chair and shook with laughter as he drew a crumpled telegram from the front of his dress-coat and tossed it into his locker.

"Suffice it to say that no improper motive took me out, and there we 'll let it rest. But this

stuffed lad I found roosting in my bed is a horse of a different color," and Rory's face at once lost its mirthful expression and his eyes flashed eagerly to the faces of his two friends. "Have you any idea how it was put there, Douglas?"

"Only an idea, Rory, but I have been simply aching to tell you what came into my mind." And then in a low tone Douglas related the occurrences of the preceding night, informed his tent-mate why he had started to order the sentinels to watch out for any person attempting to enter camp, and described the resulting affair with Hardin.

"You see," said he earnestly, "I have only a suspicion which I may have no right to speak about, but that "skin" I gave Hardin will force him to open his mouth and the explanation will probably be sent to me for indorsement. In forty-eight hours we will know what statement Hardin can make over his official signature."

"Mr. Atwell."

Douglas started and faced about. There stood Hardin in front of the tent-pole, his big frame arrayed in full dress and his face bearing the expression of one who had passed a bad half hour.

“The commandant wants you at his tent immediately.”

“All right, thank you,” said Douglas, but without waiting to hear the words, Hardin whirled about and walked sullenly down the street.

“Trouble brewin’ there, Dug,” said Roderick. “You better let me have the honor if he comes around looking for trouble.”

“No, Roderick,” said Douglas, “it ’s a personal matter. I hope that Hardin will not force me into a fight, but if he does it will be the battle of his life if he whips me.” Douglas was pulling on his brand-new dress-coat which fit his fine figure like a soft kid glove, and his chest heaved beneath the glittering bell buttons as he spoke, for a clash with Hardin promised to be an affair which well might try the courage of the bravest man in the class.

“Might just as well talk of the propriety of kicking to an army mule as to try dissuading Douglas from that fight if he ’s made up his mind to meet Hardin,” said Roderick, nodding his head toward the retreating figure of his tent-mate as Douglas turned down the street to report to the commandant. “The best I can do is to act as

second if that surly big bully gets out a challenge."

This was the state of affairs when Douglas approached the tent of the commandant of cadets. Hacker and Townsend of the first class, Marley and Barrett of the third, Mr. Lumley, the big plebe, and nearly all the other members of the old guard were already there standing to one side beneath a large tree and waiting their turn to be called.

As Douglas walked up to the tent-pole, the superintendent appeared at the door with the commandant, Captain Barton, and several other tactical officers, and before this distinguished group Douglas was obliged to report. As the superintendent spoke some final words to the commandant and departed, the rest of the group took seats in a semi-circle and the investigation was resumed in earnest. From flank to flank came the questions like the concentrated fire of a battery, while the deft fingers of a stenographer shot across the page of a note-book, recording every word that was spoken.

Thus opened the first serious stages of the campaign against hazing which was destined to

culminate in one of the greatest crises the U. S. Military Academy has ever known.

As Douglas unhesitatingly answered every question, neither concealing nor volunteering information, he felt the keen eyes of Captain Barton following his every movement, and when the commandant had covered all the phases of the hazing of Mr. Lumley, and the rushing of No. 5 by "Cadet Corporal Roderick O'Connor," Captain Barton turned toward the witness with the inquiry: "Did you say you had no means of identifying the persons who hazed Mr. Lumley or who placed the dummy in Mr. O'Connor's bed?"

"I did, sir," said Douglas.

"Might the articles of clothing left by them give any clue to their identity?"

"Yes, sir, I think so," said Douglas anxiously, as the hope began to rise in his mind that Captain Barton had secured some evidence which clearly freed Roderick from complicity in the affairs of the night.

"The articles of clothing used by the persons implicated in these affairs would probably be their own, or at least, would probably come from their tents, don't you think?" asked the Captain.

"I should think it very likely, sir."

Captain Barton then unfolded a package and handed Douglas a pillow case and a night garment. "One I picked up on Mr. Lumley's post after the hazing affair," said he, slowly, "the other I found stuffed with straw in Mr. O'Connor's bed. Can you identify these articles?"

"Yes, sir," said Douglas, flushing scarlet as he saw the name "Atwell" neatly marked in his own unmistakable hand on the hem of each article. "They are mine."

CHAPTER IV

THE CHALLENGE



UPON the discovery that his own clothing had been used in the making of the dummy and in the hazing of Mr. Lumley on post, Douglas was overwhelmed with surprise and anxiety. For one terrible moment, doubt mastered him as to Roderick O'Connor's part in this affair, but then he remembered the honorable fellow's words, the look in his manly face, and his faith was restored. Some one's honor appeared to be compromised, but he felt sure that Roderick O'Connor was not the man.

"You were on guard, were you not, Mr. Atwell, when these affairs occurred?" continued Captain Barton.

"Yes, sir."

"And came very promptly to Mr. Lumley's post immediately after the explosions took place?"

"Yes, sir."

"And a few moments later Mr. O'Connor, your tent-mate, was found out of camp?"

"Yes, sir."

"And articles bearing your name and apparently taken from your tent, but not by you, were found on Mr. Lumley's post and in Mr. O'Connor's bed. What inference do you draw from this as to Mr. O'Connor?"

"None, sir."

"Why?"

"Because Mr. O'Connor has told me that he is not guilty," responded Douglas with a vehemence he could not control. "There is not the slightest doubt as to his innocence of the charge suggested. He was out of camp without authority, and he forced his way across a sentinel's post, but that is all, sir. I don't know who made use of my clothing last night, sir, but it was not Mr. O'Connor."

For a moment a silence followed in which Douglas felt his heart pounding furiously as Captain Barton's eyes searched him through and through with a steady angry stare. The young cadet's tone was very close to the insubordinate in

its sharpness and assertiveness, but Captain Barton's training as a cadet and officer had taught him to respect offended honor, and so he withheld the rebuke that naturally rose to his lips. His voice was almost gentle when he resumed after an agonizing delay, "Mr. Atwell, you appear to have formed very definite conclusions on this subject. If in spite of all the indications to the contrary you can read the minds of men and absolutely say that Mr. O'Connor is innocent, then you ought with some certainty to be able to reverse the process and say who is guilty. Have you no opinion on this point?"

"I——" Douglas hesitated. The tormenting uncertainty was still as deep as when, on the preceding night, he had hurried to the sentinels on post to urge them into unusual watchfulness, and he could not make a conclusive reply. "I have no suspicion," said he, "which I have any right as yet to speak of. The matter is too serious to accuse without being certain, sir."

"And suppose you become certain?"

"Then I would feel myself in duty and honor bound to see that the guilty persons are properly punished."

"I have no further questions to ask this cadet," said the captain, as he leaned back in his chair with an expression of complete satisfaction.

"We can depend on that boy," continued the captain as Douglas walked rapidly back up the gravel walk with an energy suggestive of the fire that burned within. "I 'm ready to drop the case right now so far as Mr. O'Connor is concerned. That declaration by Mr. Atwell, though unsupported by evidence, is completely convincing to me. We 've got to look elsewhere for the men who did the hazing and fired the reveille gun."

"Mr. Atwell acknowledges that he was not a witness," said Captain Skinner, "and speaks solely from feelings of personal friendship for his tent-mate. In view of the strong circumstantial evidence against Mr. O'Connor, I am not convinced at all."

"Well," said Captain Barton thoughtfully, "if I were a cadet who was going out to dump a plebe in Fort Clinton ditch, I would guard against discovery by borrowing the utensils of some innocent party—such as the corporal of the guard, the officer of the day, or even a tactical officer. I can, therefore, readily imagine that the hazers figured

it out much the same way. Mr. Atwell was corporal of the guard and the last person in the world to be suspected of complicity in the act. Any one could have taken his effects. I questioned him in that heartless manner not because I felt that either he or Mr. O'Connor must be guilty, but because I wanted to discover the state of his mind. He has a remarkable and interesting history, and I 'll warrant we will find him one of the staunchest men in the corps if the crucial test should be needed."

"He is a fine manly fellow," said the commandant, "but let us hear what the first classmen have to say on the subject. Orderly, tell Mr. Townsend to step this way," and while the senior captain of the U. S. corps of cadets approached the commandant, Douglas returned to his tent.

The assembly for the second drill of the day had already sounded and Karl and Roderick were gone—out in the dust seated on a caisson of the light battery as it thundered down the plain. Douglas could recognize them clearly as the voice of the instructor pealed out over camp: "In Battery, March! Action, Rear!" and he saw his two friends leap to the ground, snap out the pintel pin,

and spring to their places beside the 3.2" breech loading rifle.

In this same interesting drill, Douglas would participate to-morrow, but to-day he was a member of the old guard and as such would be available for no further duty until after the mid-day meal.

Utterly tired and brain weary, he tossed his blankets upon the floor and prepared to sleep. During the preceding night on guard he had rested but an hour and a half and now nearly one-fourth of the time available for rest had been occupied in the nerve-racking ordeal from which he had just returned, but in spite of his weariness his mind could not dispel the disagreeable revelations which the investigation had produced. At one moment he was willing to accept the use of his clothing in the hazing of Mr. Lumley as part of a practical joke, but in the next instant he could see it only as a vicious effort to involve himself and Roderick in a dishonorable affair. Exhaustion soon overcame anxiety, however, and he slept.

It was fifteen minutes to one o'clock when Roderick gently waked him and he jumped to his

feet with the enquiry, "How is it, Rory, how is it?"

"Nothing new," responded Roderick. "The commandant has just finished the investigation and it seems that nothing has been found out. Hardin has been called three times and each time he came back looking blacker than ink. I take it that he has been asked some unpleasant questions about that "skin" you gave him. I've been down twice myself and freely confessed my sins and feel pretty certain that they intend to absolve me—that is of my chevrons and all further camp privileges. But that's all right; I took the risk and now I can stand my punishment. But you have n't told me what happened to you while you were before the footlights. Anything startling?"

"Somewhat," said Douglas, and then as he rapidly dressed for dinner formation he gave Roderick the information concerning the identity of the articles of clothing which had been found on Mr. Lumley's post and in Roderick's bed, and for the first time the jovial fellow's face flushed with anger and indignation.

"It is barely possible," said he as the two friends walked down the company street, "that

there is nothing unfriendly in this trick, but I have constantly feared something nasty in the background, and here it is. The serious turn matters have taken will prevent any practical joker from revealing his part in the affair, so the chances are we will never know who is guilty. There is just one virtue in the situation—we are pretty certain that the fellow who stuffed that dummy is also the fellow who carried your pillow case out on Mr. Lumley's post."

The assembly sounded. The gray lines fell into ranks straight as a ruler's edge, and in a few moments the big battalion was marching away to dinner.

It was nearly two o'clock when the battalion formed line on the general parade ground after return from dinner, and with the 1st sergeants' command "dismissed," the silent, erect companies broke into a swarming mass of shouting, clamoring youths, each frantically calling for some special friend who was "dragging a spooney dancer."¹ That night there was to be a hop at Cullom Hall and according to mutual agreement

¹"Dragging."—A cadet who is taking a girl to the hop is said to be "dragging a femme." If pretty, she is a "spooney femme."

no cards could be made out until ranks were broken after return from dinner. This then was the precious moment during which each must seize the fleeting opportunity to secure a dance with a favored one, for no favors could be reserved. Within five minutes after return from dinner, therefore, all cards were filled, and every "femme," whether plain or charming, was thus assured a lovely time at the cadet hop.

But for Douglas, Roderick and the plebes, this scene had no interest: none for Douglas, because in the gentle art of dancing he was a hopeless failure; none for Roderick, because it would be a breach of arrest to leave the limits of camp, and this offense would cause his certain dismissal from the corps; none for the plebes, because it is an article in the unwritten code of the corps that no plebe shall attend the hops and the record has yet to be made of a plebe who dared to violate the edict.

Instead of hop cards and pretty girls, instruction in target practice until 4:00 p. m. would occupy the attention of the plebes, while the yearlings who had not qualified in swimming were to report for additional practice at 3:00 p. m.; but

while Douglas was no dancer, his prowess as a swimmer was well known in the corps, and he was, therefore, required to attend no duty until full dress parade at 5:10 p. m.

Camp was seething with excitement caused by the investigation and the various conjectures produced by the questions asked and answers given, and a constant stream of yearlings came to Douglas Atwell's tent as the afternoon wore away, while Douglas and Roderick tried to pick up from their conversation some clue to the identity of the men who had hazed Mr. Lumley and had fired the reveille gun. But when the sun was hanging like a ball of fire over old Fort Put and the drummer rattled off the first call for parade, only this much was certain—the men who had used Douglas Atwell's clothing had effectually concealed their operations from the rest of the corps.

"Moreover," said Douglas, as he dressed for parade, "not a person seemed to know that my clothing had been used at all. We've made no progress in this business while the 'skin' list at this parade may complicate the situation."

Already the visitors' seats were thronged with

ladies in charming white gowns—chaperons for the merry groups of girls who had gathered to catch their first glimpse of the famous corps of cadets on parade. Here and there the blue blouse and gold shoulder straps of an officer could be seen among the spectators, while the handsome figure of Captain McAuley, in full dress uniform, occupied the center of this pretty scene.

As the assembly sounded, the companies dropped into silent, erect lines in the company streets, and the cadet captains in their smart red sashes inspected every rifle, scrutinized every belt and breast-plate and severely rebuked every failure to sustain the exalted standards of excellence that had been observed by generations of cadets.

Followed by the gaze of these assembled spectators, Cadet Adjutant Maitland and Acting Sergt.-Major McGrew took posts on the parade ground, and to the martial strains of "El Capitan" the companies marched to their positions on the line. To the well-trained cadet it was mere routine, but to the spectator it was a charming sight to see the lines standing at "parade rest" as the band swept along the front from flank to flank and halted in its place on the right. As its

music ceased, the clarion-voiced bugles pealed out "retreat," and with the last note thereof the retreat gun rolled out its salute to the closing day. While the air was still quivering and vibrating with the shock of discharge, Maitland's voice pealed out as clear as a bell, "Battalion Attention!" The notes of the Star Spangled Banner floated softly out across the camp, the spectators rose in respectful salute, and "Old Glory" sank slowly from the top of the flagstaff.

The ranks were opened, and Maitland, the very personification of dignity and precision, walked smartly to the front and center.

"Present Arms!" The rifles rang in unison beneath the stroke of the well-trained hands, and Maitland's sword flashed in the sunlight in a sharp salute to Captain McAuley, the officer in charge.

A few moments' manual followed, Maitland resumed his post, and once more his clear powerful voice rolled out from flank to flank of the line, "Attention to Orders!" His sword shot to his shoulder and then snapped into its sheath and Douglas caught his breath as he saw the dashing adjutant loose one shining bell button on his chest

and draw forth an official document. Though every mind was upon the young soldier's words, yet not an eye was turned from the straight front as Maitland read as follows:

"Headquarters U. S. Military Academy,
"West Point, N. Y., July —

"Special Orders No. —

"I. For having absented himself from camp without authority for about twenty minutes, and having attempted to force his way across a sentinel's post at about 10:35 p. m. on the—instant, the appointment of Cadet Roderick O'Connor, third class, as a corporal in the Battalion of Cadets is revoked. He is also confined to that portion of the encampment east of the color line until the 28th of August and will walk two tours of extra duty every Wednesday and Saturday afternoons for the same period.

"Cadet O'Connor is hereby released from arrest."

Roderick's chevrons were gone, his privileges likewise, but this was not all. Before this assembled throng Maitland was now reading a letter to the commandant of cadets which in scathing terms reviewed the conduct of the unfortunate lad, and held up his example as one to be

avoided, and Douglas felt a lump rise in his throat and choke him as he listened. Roderick was humiliated to the earth, yet there was no imputation of the dishonorable, no reference to the attempt to deceive by the use of the dummy. The vehement defense which Douglas had made at the investigation had borne its fruit, but what was this Maitland was reading? The leading words of an additional order had escaped Douglas' distracted attention, but these words came like a blow in the face: "Pursuant to the recommendation of the commandant of cadets, the following appointment in the Battalion of Cadets is announced to take effect immediately:

"To be corporal:—Cadet Samuel Smoke, vice O'Connor reduced."

Sam Smoke had won the chevrons which Roderick O'Connor had lost.

Douglas's brain was aflame with tormenting thoughts as he mechanically obeyed the commands and passed in review with his company. Then the column swung into line in the rear of the line of tents, beyond the view of the eager crowd, to listen to the list of delinquencies as read by Maitland. Half consciously he heard the petty charges

reeled off against cadet after cadet until he was startled from his preoccupation by the report:—"Hardin.—Being a sentinel on No. 4, did fail, at about 10:45 p. m. to prevent a party from entering camp across his post."

Once more Douglas was upon the alert, his mind clear and vigilant. A few moments later the companies were dismissed in the company street and he and Roderick were alone in their tent. The handsome lad's eyes were almost moist and his face was quivering as he tossed off his dress-coat with its gold lace chevrons which he could wear no more. Then he drew his new blouse from the stretcher and slowly cut the marks of rank from the sleeves. "Never mind, Douglas," said he with an effort as he stepped out into the company street, a private reduced to the ranks, "I could n't defend myself, don't you know, so my case looked blacker than it really was. Some day I'll tell you why I lost my chevrons. I suppose I deserved all I got, but I must conceal my feelings."

"Mr. Atwell."

Douglas raised his eyes to see his way blocked by Sam Smoke, the newly made corporal, stand-

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ing with arms akimbo and legs apart. "As second for Mr. Hardin," said the irate yearling in a loud tone, "I am authorized to say that he gives you your choice between a fight and a public apology."

"I apologize only to gentlemen, Smoke," responded Douglas, hotly, "and that puts Hardin off the list. Go back and tell him that I never accepted a challenge with greater pleasure."

"And say, Smoke," broke in Rory in his most cheerful tone as he laid his hand confidentially upon Smoke's shoulder, "I don't like to burden your mind with details, don't you know, but as you are doing orderly for old Hardin, would you mind dragging back the information that I will fight him next in case he defeats Atwell?"



"I APOLOGIZE ONLY TO GENTLEMEN"

CHAPTER V

A PLEBE IN TROUBLE



VERY one in camp knew that Hardin had challenged Douglas to a fight, and that not only had the challenge been accepted, but that Roderick O'Connor had forced a second fight on Hardin in case he escaped a thrashing at the hands of his tent-mate. Quick as instinct, Roderick had taken advantage of the public and ostentatious manner in which the challenge had been delivered, to turn the laugh on the challenger. Hardin was not popular either with the yearlings or with the first classmen, while the plebes cordially hated him for his unnecessary severity and surly manner. Had it not been for this situation, Roderick might not have escaped opposition in this daring procedure, but as matters stood there was only one man in camp who expressed sympathy for Hardin and this man was Hacker, the big first

classman whose reputation for fairness was little better than Hardin's.

The suddenness with which this situation had developed had raised interest to fever heat. Within the brief space of forty-eight hours a plebe had been dumped into the Fort Clinton ditch; the reveille gun had been fired, Roderick O'Connor had been "busted" for trying to force his way into camp after an unlawful absence, and the man who had secured his "scalp" had, with singular indelicacy, carried a challenge to his tent-mate. These incidents alone were sufficient to arouse intense interest, but rumor had been founded upon rumor and conjecture built on conjecture until all camp was agog. It was generally understood that the investigation had completely failed to locate the hazers, but that reputations formerly unimpeachable had been called into question, and that the finger of suspicion pointed mysteriously at some of the highest ranking chevrons in the corps. Every one from plebe to first classman had his theory, but to Douglas and Roderick the seemingly disconnected and inexplicable incidents had a sequence which time was sure to disclose.

Lying on his bedding in his tent, Roderick watched the sputtering candle light playing back and forth in the night breeze as Marley, Karl, and Douglas discussed the situation. It was the first time since the beginning of yearling year that Roderick had missed a hop, and his eyes roamed wistfully to the lighted windows of Cullom Hall, while his class-mates dressed for the dance which he was prohibited from attending and his good friends talked on without him.

"As I told you while on guard last night, Douglas," said Marley, "we are rapidly running into a crisis. This investigation, the heavy penalties imposed for offenses that used to be regarded as trivial, shows that the present policy is to smash hazing, no matter who is hit."

"Yes," answered Douglas, "hazing must go. It's not our business to say whether it's a good or a bad policy. When a superior officer gives an order it's our business to obey and let the superior be responsible for the consequences."

"Ho, ho, ho!" laughed Karl, thrusting out his chest. "For a paragon of military virtues there's only one man in the corps who's got you lashed to the mast, and that is Billy Black, the worship-

ful captain of B company. So far as the performance of duty is concerned you beat the charge of the Light Brigade. But let us get right down to brass tacks. You know as well as I that an order to the corps to stop breathing would be just as effective as an order to stop all kinds of hazing. Why, these plebes must be taught to obey—it's the fundamental principle of their profession—"

"And you would teach them to obey by disobeying the orders of their superiors! I tell you, Karl, this hazing business as now conducted is going to be stopped and it's the business of this class to take the leadership in stopping it. Everyone knows that real discipline cannot be too strictly enforced with the plebes; but harassing them in their tents, ordering them to do exhausting exercises, and to perform work for an upper classman which he should do for himself—all these things are against true discipline, not for it, and they are going to be stopped. Boys, I'm not trying to start a campaign—the campaign has already been started and we've got our orders. Our programme is to decide how to obey to the best interests of the class and the academy."

The faint sound of a waltz was wafted across

the camp as Douglas ceased speaking, and with a sigh Roderick sat up on his bedding.

"I claim veteran honors in this campaign already," said he as he glanced pathetically at the sleeves where chevrons used to rest, "and I, therefore, think I am qualified to make a suggestion. I'm in favor of immediate action. I would make Douglas Atwell chairman of a committee with instructions to wait on the superintendent and tell him that we are ready to start all over again and begin a new life; that we are deeply pained by the errors and excesses into which youth and inexperience have led us, and that so far as climatic conditions and baneful heredity permit we are ready to renounce the plebes and all their works and pomps and live hereafter a more holy and sanctified life. If the superintendent will revoke all existing punishments and allow Roderick O'Connor to go to the hops, all his past sins will be forgiven and the excellent entente that heretofore existed between us will in no wise be injured by our recent misunderstanding."

Rory's "solution of the situation" was received with bursts of laughter from Marley and Karl, but Douglas was too much in earnest to even

show a smile. "This is no time for frivolity, Rory," said he impatiently. "We can't ignore the question any longer, and we can't trifle away our time in meaningless talk."

"Crushed!" exclaimed Roderick tragically as he sank back upon his blankets and chuckled softly to himself, while Douglas turned toward a plebe, who was knocking at the tent-pole.

"What is it, Mr. Hart?"

"I would like to see you on a personal matter, sir," said the plebe.

"Come in, Mr. Hart," said Douglas, and as the plebe stepped into the light of the candles it was apparent that he was thoroughly excited and nervous. With hat in hand he stood awkwardly at attention staring stupidly at the opposite wall and waiting for permission to speak.

"Have you any objection to the presence of these other cadets?" asked Douglas in the strictly business-like manner which he always employed with plebes.

"N—no, sir," said the plebe as he glanced from face to face.

"Then sit down and I will hear what you have to say."

"I 've been called out to fight, sir," said Mr. Hart, as he seated himself upon a locker modestly declining a camp-chair, for such luxuries are deemed inconsistent with the spirit of plebedom. "I was notified a few minutes ago, sir," continued the plebe, "that I was going to be licked for B.J.ety¹ and I would like to know if—if the man who called me out had any right to do so. Some of the fellows in my class said I would get a square deal if I came to you, sir, so I took the liberty of coming."

"Who challenged you, Mr. Hart?"

"Mr. Smoke, sir."

Roderick sat up and his eye flashed with interest. "How did he happen to challenge you?" continued Douglas.

"I was on guard last night, sir—Mr. Marley will remember that I was on his relief."

"Yes," said Marley, with growing interest, "you were on No. 2. Go ahead."

"Well, sir, Mr. Smoke came up to the guard-tent about half-past ten o'clock, and asked permission of the officer of the guard to go into camp. Mr. Hacker turned around to me and said, 'Mr.

¹ "B.J.ety."—A cadet equivalent for "freshness."

Hart, you have been amanuensis to-day. Just step in there and record Mr. Smoke's departure and return.' I looked at the clock and recorded the departure at 10:29 and I could swear that I made no mistake, sir. It was while I was sitting at the table that the explosions occurred in camp, but I remained at my place while the detachment of the guard went off to Mr. Lumley's post. I was standing at the door of the tent looking towards camp when the first sergeants finished calling their rolls and I saw a cadet coming from the direction of camp. I heard him call out something about Mr. O'Connor being hived absent from the roll-call and though I could not see his face I am sure it was Mr. Smoke, sir. It was exactly 10:43 and I saw that Mr. Smoke had overstayed his time in camp by four minutes. At 10:44 he came up to the tent and said, 'Did you get my return, Mr. Hart?' I said, 'No, sir. You did n't report.' He answered, 'Well, you B.J.est plebe, I 've been back here five minutes. You better wake up and attend to business!'

"I was so sure that I saw Mr. Smoke returning from camp that I answered on the spur of the moment, 'I don't think you were back, sir,'

and I was about to explain why when he jumped into the tent, ordered me to stand at attention and threatened all kinds of consequences if I did not alter my manner towards upper classmen. Then he said, 'Mister, you record my return properly and don't make any mistake about it.'

"I recorded his return at 10:44, the time at which he actually came to the guard-tent, and to-night he was reported for being five minutes late in reporting return from camp."

Never did the wrongs of a plebe receive a more attentive hearing from upper classmen than did those of Mr. Hart, as Roderick and Douglas eagerly swallowed every word he said.

"Well," said Douglas, "how did the challenge come about?"

"I was in my tent to-night, sir, when Mr. Smoke came along. He stopped and demanded an explanation as to why I had reported him late returning from camp. I said, 'I reported your return at the time you came back, sir.'"

"Mr. Smoke stepped into the tent and shouted, 'Mister, do you mean to say that you don't believe me when I tell you I was back in time?'"

"I was thoroughly angered and I answered,

‘Yes, sir, that is what I mean. You did n’t come back in time and I can’t record a falsehood.’

“Some other third classman was standing in the company street, and I heard him say, ‘Call him out and lick him, Smoke. It ’s the B.J.est thing I ever heard from a plebe.’

“‘That ’s a fighting offense, Mr. Dumguard,’¹ said Mr. Smoke. ‘Appoint your seconds and we ’ll settle this thing in Fort Clinton.’ ”

The plebe’s voice was quivering with emotion as he finished. “I ’m not afraid of fighting,” said he, “although I know that Mr. Smoke can easily defeat me. I can stand a licking if I get it in a fair and square fight, but what I would like to know is this—must I take a licking for doing what I know to be right just because I am a plebe?”

“Not by any means,” said Douglas emphatically, “you ’ll take no licking from Mr. Smoke. What you did was perfectly right, but I can’t say as much concerning your language. You were in duty and honor bound to record the time at which Mr. Smoke actually reported his return, but you went too far when you said you could not

¹“Dumguard.”—A term of contempt frequently applied to a plebe.

record a falsehood. You were not sure that Mr. Smoke was wilfully falsifying—”

“I felt certain that he was, sir,” interrupted the plebe with an earnestness that could not be doubted, “and if that is the real issue at stake, I ’m ready to fight at the drop of a hat.”

“There will be no fight, Mr. Hart,” said Douglas, decisively. “We will hold a class-meeting on the subject, but I can give the decision before we meet—there will be no fight on account of that challenge.”

“Very well, sir,” said the plebe hesitatingly. “I hope that you don’t think that I am trying to crawl out of danger—”

“Not at all,” interrupted Douglas. “Your intentions are above reproach, and I will be very glad to give you further advice if more trouble should arise on account of this matter.”

Completely restored to his normal frame of mind, elated at the kindness and courtesy of his reception, and assured of the support of the yearling class in all that was upright and honest, Mr. Hart stepped out into the company street and returned to his tent.

“Well, here we are,” said Marley. “I have

been urging action, but here we have it thrust upon us. Douglas, you told the plebe that there would be no fight with Smoke. How could you be so sure of that? To tell a yearling that he is a liar is a rather risky pleasantry for a plebe."

"Yes," said Douglas, slowly, "provided the plebe made a mistake."

"You don't mean to say that Smoke made a false official statement?"

Douglas glanced at Roderick, but the latter was staring blankly at the floor and absent-mindedly tearing a hop card to shreds. "That remains to be seen," said Douglas. "At any rate, we will hold that class-meeting and put the fight question to a vote. Smoke had no right to call the plebe out. If he thought a fight could not be avoided he should have referred the matter to the 'scrapping committee' to see that the plebe got a fair chance. He apparently jumped at the fight in the hope of—well, I suppose I have no right to interpret his motives. He'll get a square deal and not a bit more and the plebe will get just as much."

The sudden rattle of the fifes and drums on the general parade, sounding tattoo, brought the whole group to their feet, for it was time to make

down beds and get ready for retiring. Marley hesitated with one foot on the edge of the tent floor as he started to leave. "Suppose the class does not sustain you?" he suggested.

Douglas looked at his class-mate and his chest heaved. He could not tell the thoughts that were raging in his mind, so with gentle resistance to curiosity far more pleasant than weak compliance, he turned Marley away with the remark, "Well, old boy, let us cross that bridge when we come to it."

In perfect silence Douglas and Roderick tossed the blankets upon the bare floor of their tent, and not a word had passed between them when "taps" sounded out at the guard-tent, lights were extinguished, and Cadet Lieutenant Rutherford made his dark-lantern inspection to see that all were in bed.

Thus closed two days of discord, mental anxiety, and complications which it would require a year to unravel. It had been an exhausting experience, but sleep brings recovery to tired nerves and work is a cure for most ills that beset the human mind, so the roar of the reveille gun at 5:10 a. m. brought our two young friends to their

feet ready for the most rigorous requirements of a new day.

Tents were put in order, streets were cleaned and dragged, and the battalion marched away to breakfast at six o'clock. Upon return to the parade ground, Maitland published the details for drill, and at 7:10 a. m. when the majority of the world is just beginning to stir from bed, the U. S. Corps of Cadets was in line for its first drill.

Pursuant to an order from headquarters, guard mounting during the rest of the encampment was to take place in the evening immediately after parade, thus permitting nearly all the drills of the day to be finished in the morning.

According to this programme, the plebes and yearlings were under arms for infantry drill with a detail of first classmen to perform the duties of captains, lieutenants, and sergeants of the companies. Upon the right of their line another detail of first classmen was forming to proceed to the rifle range for target practice until 12:45 p. m.

It was now in the second week of July. The plebes had already been admitted to the battalion and their drill was rapidly approaching the re-

quired standards of excellence. In one short month under the ceaseless instruction of cadets and superior officers, the helpless mass of young civilians who reported at the academy in the early days of June had been converted into a well-trained body of cadets whose efficiency would compare favorably with that of the best military organizations in the country. That the so-called system of hazing at West Point was the principal means of securing this result was the candid belief of a great many cadets, an article of faith with a few, and denied by only a small minority. In view of these deep-seated convictions it was apparent that the man had a herculean task to perform who proposed to lead a class in opposing methods which had prevailed for a generation.

To whatever cause the result might be ascribed, it was clear that the awkward, random gait, the grinning, familiar manner of the precocious youth were gone, and in their place were the erect, unfaltering bearing, the steady gaze and collected manner which every cadet and gentleman must strive to attain.

In the accomplishment of these ends, Douglas Atwell had played his part as one of the cadet of-

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ficers in charge of the plebes; his work had received the commendation of his superior officers, and as the lines fell in this morning for drill, the thought was strong in his mind that he had never once resorted to the methods of the hazer.

“The vices are greater than the advantages, and no matter what it costs me to-night, I will do my best to stop the system,” mused he, and his rifle quivered under the sharp clutch of his hands as he snapped it up to the “right shoulder” and marched out on the cavalry plain for drill.

CHAPTER VI

A STORMY CLASS MEETING



T was 8:00 a. m. when the recall pealed out across the plain and the companies broke ranks in front of camp. Thirty minutes later, the assembly was sounding once more and the officer of the day was receiving the reports of the detachments which were forming for the next set of morning drills:—the sea coast guns, the machine guns, the light battery, target practice, and bridge building. For all of these, the first class furnished its detail of participants or instructors, while half the whole class was now forming for duty from 8:30 a. m. to 12:45 p. m. in building the bridge across an arm of the Hudson. It was Douglas' turn for the light battery, while Rory was on the list as balk-carrier for the bridge, and while poor Rory besmeared his face with tar, ruined his white trousers, and sweated and grunted like a hod-carrier to the tune of "more balks,

more balks," Douglas dashed up and down the plain in the most interesting drill of the yearling course. The pleasure for him was marred somewhat by the fact that fate placed him in the same detachment with Hardin, and again and again as the pieces limbered up, these two young men who had agreed to fight each other to a finish, grasped hands and rendered mutual assistance as they leaped to the limber chest, and rode away with little meek-faced Dalton sitting demurely between them.

The day was smoking hot, and even Douglas with all his enthusiasm for drill was glad to hear the rattle of recall at 10 a. m. and turn back to camp. With ten minutes breathing space to brush off the dust and swallow a refreshing drink, this same detail then marched away to the target range to shoot until 12:45 p. m.

As the latter hour approached, the details came marching into camp from all directions. Dirty, tired and hungry, they broke ranks and rushed away to their tents, and over the rattle and din of preparation for dinner formation, the shout of the yearlings could be heard all over camp, "lemo, please, lemo, please." The plebes were

already back from instruction in dancing and swimming, and wherever a yearling could smuggle a lemon and a bit of sugar into camp, a plebe could always be found who was ready to brew a cold lemonade and share half the fruits of this sinful proceeding.

Fifteen minutes, then, for ablutions and change of clothing, and spic and span in clean white ducks, the battalion marched away to dinner. The old hills of West Point echoed and rolled to the fife and drum corps' rendition of "The Hungry Squad," as rank upon rank swung round in front of Grant Hall, and, breaking at the lowest step, sprang up into the dining-room. The roar of conversation and the rattle of table ware could be heard for a hundred yards as the hungry lads ate and in the thirty minutes allowed for dinner exchanged the experiences of the morning. Then the column marched back to camp, and having no duties for the afternoon, Douglas was once more alone with his thoughts and problems.

It was necessary to map out a programme for the meeting which he must call that evening, and though he felt sure that only one course was

open to him, yet he was equally certain that though the fight with Mr. Hart might be prevented, no lasting good could result without the co-operation of the first class. With this thought in mind, he left Roderick dozing peacefully on his blankets and walked down the street to the tent occupied by Cadet Captain Black, to whose care the command of B Company had been most wisely entrusted.

"Come in, Atwell," said Black in his quick, decisive manner, "I see that you have something on your mind. What 's troubling you?"

"I did n't think I showed my trouble so plainly," said Douglas in surprise, "but I am somewhat worried, and I wanted to ask your opinion on some matters of class policy."

"Having called the turn as a prophet I won't decline the rôle of philosopher and guide. If I'm worth consulting, go ahead."

Then without referring to any of his personal relations to those concerned Douglas related the circumstances which led up to Smoke's challenge to Mr. Hart and announced his intention of calling a class-meeting to prevent the fight.

"I feel quite certain that my course is right,"

said he, "but I would like to hear your opinion and to know what general policy the first class is likely to follow if this hazing business comes to a crisis."

"You are certainly right in trying to stop the fight," said Black decisively, "but I don't envy you the job. Between the plebes and the yearlings there is a natural antagonism and the man who tries to control their conflicts has a big contract to fill. Morally, of course no one can approve a fight, but practically they seem to be inevitable. When the plebes must be converted in a single month from raw, giggling, undisciplined boys into a body of trained and disciplined young men, and this by the direct supervision of cadets who have just been graduated from the course, it is impossible to prevent occasional fights as the result of wounded feelings.

"But I think I can speak for the whole first class when I say that the present system of running fights is disapproved. The scrapping committees are simply producing fights instead of preventing them. If a plebe cannot be disciplined and a fight cannot be avoided, then the class and not a committee should call him out. As a gen-

eral proposition, however, all prearranged fights should be prohibited. Let the difference be settled on the spur of the moment or not at all.

"By the way," continued Black, "for a man determined to keep the peace, you are somewhat belligerent yourself. Did n't you accept Hardin's challenge?"

"No more determined on peace in my class than you in yours," said Douglas. "Would you have declined Hardin's challenge?"

Black laughed. "That sums up the whole situation. Any man with courage will fight if he is challenged, and just so long as cadets have courage there will be fighting at the Military Academy. It's our business to see that it does not become a Heidelberg vice—that's why scrapping committees were organized, and that's why they should now be abolished. I tell you, Atwell, it is a wise man who can fix the limit and say here it is that virtue ends and vice begins. Some of the greatest heads of the academy have thought it best to leave the subject alone, while others have given it their approval. I think that all will agree, however, that the system that has grown up in recent years simply permits an upper classman to conceal brutality or even positive

fraud under the cloak of wounded honor. Is that about the case with Smoke?"

Douglas flushed and hesitated. "I can only say that there are some features of the case which force me to interfere and prevent the fight."

"I don't know exactly what motive impels you, but it must be a strong one indeed," said Black warmly. "You are making a mighty daring move and I guarantee you all the influence I can command in the first class if things get running cross-wise on account of it."

Douglas left the tent in a much happier frame of mind, and all that afternoon he studied the programme he proposed following. Parade passed off as usual, and dusk was falling on the Highlands of the Hudson when the long battalion swung into line after return from supper. It is customary at this time to make unofficial announcements to the corps, so after the publication of an unimportant order by Maitland, Cadet Captain Townsend's voice rolled out over the waiting ranks. "Mr. Atwell calls a meeting of the third class to discuss matters of great importance. All not on duty are urged to be present. Dismiss your companies."

"Dismissed!" commanded the acting 1st ser-

geants in unison, and as Douglas turned to leave the ranks Roderick took him by the arm and the two friends walked together to A company street where the meeting was to be held.

No urgency was necessary to get the class together, for some plebe gossip had been overheard and the word ran like wild-fire that a fight was to be discussed and vetoed. An eager class was therefore gathered between No. 3 and A company tents when Douglas Atwell, as class president, mounted a camp-chair and called the meeting to order.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we meet to-night to determine whether a plebe, Mr. Hart, should be called out to fight. I will explain that he has already been challenged by Mr. Smoke, but you will recollect that upon coming to camp the class decided that a meeting should be called whenever any trouble rose with the plebes, and that the matter should be settled by the class or else referred to a committee as has been done by some of our predecessors. In the case now under consideration, Mr. Smoke has acted without consulting the class, and I have called the meeting pursuant to our original agreement."

"Mr. President."

"Mr. Hardin."

"I move that Mr. Smoke's action be ratified by acclamation."

There was a moment's awkward silence, and then to the astonishment of every one Roderick seconded the motion, but in the language of that same jovial authority, "when it came to the acclaiming part, don't you know, there was nothing left but 'smoke.' "

"The motion having failed," said Douglas in his most official manner, "we will proceed in the regular order of business, and I will tell you the circumstances which caused me to call the class together," and then in cool and sequential manner he repeated such parts of his conversation with Mr. Hart as related solely to the difficulty with Smoke.

"To sum up," said Douglas, "Mr. Hart recorded the time of departure and the time at which Mr. Smoke actually presented himself at the guard-tent. Mr. Smoke claimed that he had returned several minutes before, though he had not reported his return, and that he did not overstay his time. The plebe made no change in his report

and when he was subsequently taken to task for failing to alter the record, he lost his temper and said he would not record a falsehood. The question before the class is this: Does the conduct of Mr. Hart demand that he be challenged to fight?"

"Mr. President."

"Mr. Adamson."

"I would like to hear Mr. Smoke's version of this affair."

All the bravado had gone from Smoke's manner when he stepped upon a camp-stool to respond to this call, and he visibly trembled as he struggled through his story of the affair with Mr. Hart. From his narrative, Mr. Hart was made to appear a paragon of B.J.ety who had surpassed the limits of forbearance when he said that he would not record a lie. "I've simply got to fight him," concluded Smoke; "I think it 's the only honorable way out of it."

"So do I," said Adamson emphatically.

Douglas caught his breath, for Adamson was one of the oldest and most conservative men in the class and commanded a respectful hearing whenever he spoke. "It looks like this to me," continued he. "There was a difference of opin-

ion as to whether Smoke got back in time or not, and the plebe stuck to his record, which was perfectly right. Then Smoke jumped him for doing his duty, wherein Smoke was wrong. Finally, the plebe insinuated that Smoke was a liar. Gentlemen, I 'm from Kentucky, and I say the plebe should be licked if Smoke can lick him in a fair fight."

Smoke nearly shouted with joy as he heard the words and a wave of approval seemed to rise and sweep all opposition before it. The words of assurance that Douglas had spoken to Mr. Hart rushed through his mind, and looking down he saw Roderick watching him with eager expectancy. Adamson's strong speech was forcing him to bring before the class some matters which he had hoped to settle with Smoke in private when the proper time arrived. There was no trace, however, of the anxiety he felt as he turned and again addressed the class.

"Before putting this matter to a vote," said he, "I would like to ask Mr. Smoke some questions if he has no objections."

"Certainly. I have no objections," said Smoke, but the tremor in his voice belied his words.

"Was the hour of departure, 10:29, correct?"

"I think it was."

"Was it 10:44 when you first spoke to Mr. Hart at the guard-tent?"

"I—I think it was, but I could n't swear to it."

"Then if you did not overstay your time in camp you must have been back five minutes before you reported to Mr. Hart."

"Yes, about five minutes."

"Did you make two trips or only return once from camp that night?"

"Only once."

"Then do you recollect that I met you as you returned and asked you if they had hived the man who was out of camp, to which you replied: 'Hived him cold. It was Rory O'Connor, your tent mate. They also found a dummy in his bed to deceive the Tac., if he made an inspection.'"

Smoke jumped as if struck and the whole class eagerly watched him.

"Do you think you occupied about five minutes in walking to the guard-tent—a distance of about fifty paces?"

"I—I 'm not sure about the time at all," said Smoke, almost choking.

"Well, if the plebe saw you coming from camp,

heard you speaking with me, and noted that you had overstayed your time, do you think he ought to be licked for asserting that he could not record a statement he knew to be false?"

"The plebe could explain the situation," broke in Adamson hotly, "and not insinuate that an upper classman was a liar."

"Exactly," said Douglas, "the plebe made a mistake to use such language, but the question before the class is this: should the man who was right be licked by the man who was wrong, simply because one is a plebe, the other a yearling?"

"No," shouted Adamson with rising anger. "He should be licked no matter who he is. The man who is n't ready to fight must not insinuate that his neighbor is a liar."

"Are you ready for the question?" demanded Douglas in a tone scarcely less angry than that of Adamson.

"Ready," chorused the class.

"All those in favor of calling the plebe out, form double rank on the left; all those who are not, form double rank on the right."

The class parted as if split in half, and in a

moment two solid ranks were facing each other with Adamson at the head of one, and Rory O'Connor at the head of the other.

"Adamson and O'Connor please count the number of men on your respective sides," said Douglas, and all eyes followed the two young men as they walked down the columns. Twice they made their count and then side by side they walked back to make their report.

"How many are for the fight?" said Douglas.

"Forty-six," said Adamson, "including myself."

"How many are opposed?"

"Forty-six," said Roderick, "including myself."

"A tie vote," said Douglas, and his heart leaped as his fearless gaze swept over the lines of faces, and then in the clear firm voice of one who knows his course and proposes following it, he addressed the class.

"Gentlemen, we agreed that in case of a tie the president should cast the deciding vote. I am for the opposition. The plebe will not fight."

A few minutes later Douglas stood in front of his tent, while his excited comrades dispersed in angry or elated groups to fight over again the

question which had so nearly divided the class. With a feeling bordering on exultation, he flung back the tent-flaps and entered. As he lit the candles an orderly stepped up to the tent with the words, "Captain Barton, the acting commandant of cadets, directs you to return this paper by endorsement not later than to-morrow morning." Handing an official document to Douglas, the orderly faced about, and was gone.

"It's Hardin's explanation, Rory," said Douglas excitedly, as he glanced down the written sheet. "Listen." And then the astonished lad read as follows:

WEST POINT, N. Y.,
July

The Commandant of Cadets,
Sir,

In explanation of the report, "Being a sentinel on No. 4, did fail at about 10:45 p. m. to prevent a party from entering camp across his post," I have the honor to state that the report is a mistake.

No person entered camp across my post either with or without authority while I was on guard.

Very respectfully,

W. B. HARDIN,

Cadet private, 3rd Class.

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The sound of rapidly approaching footsteps made Douglas look up, and there in front of the tent stood Smoke, his face flushed and twitching with anger.

"Hardin wants you to fix the date on which you 'll be ready to fight him," said he, "and he wants you to fix it quick."

Douglas folded the explanation thoughtfully and looked over his candle "reflector"¹ at his furious class-mate.

"Tell Hardin that I will fight him to-morrow morning at daybreak."

¹ "Reflector."—A tin candle box used by cadets in camp.

CHAPTER VII

A FIGHT TO A FINISH



WITH Hardin's explanation still gripped tightly between his fingers, Douglas sat for several minutes gazing blankly at the flickering lights in his "reflector." In the first flush of anger, inspired by the words which he believed to be utterly false and intended to deceive, he had committed himself to a fight on the following morning, but now as he reviewed the incidents with Hardin on No. 4, it seemed quite possible that he had made a mistake.

"Rory," said he, "I am afraid that I have blundered like an ass. I did hear Hardin challenge, but I did n't see any one cross his post. The conversation comes back to me word for word, and I can remember that I did not ask him if his post had been crossed; I asked him why he had not stopped the person whom he challenged.

"Now, if Hardin can assert truthfully that no

one crossed his post, why, there was no one to stop, and I have accused him wrongfully. It 's a hard thing to do, Rory," he continued, as he jumped to his feet and paced furiously up and down the tent, "but if I 'm wrong I am going to apologize and refuse to fight. Every man in the corps will think me a coward, but I will have to stand all the consequences of my mistake."

"An apology will do no good," answered Roderick as he picked up the explanation and glanced over it carefully. "You have already told Hardin that you did n't consider him a gentleman, and an apology would only give him the chance to insult you. You might do it, but that would not stop the trouble. Hardin wants a fight. He thinks that he can whip you and he wants the prestige of defeating the man who defeated Hadley. Such a victory would make him champion of that section of the class which opposes your policy, and if he then defeated me there would be no one to oppose him with force. This quarrel is not on account of that 'skin' at all, Douglas; it 's the result of natural antipathy between two different characters, the climax of which gave an excuse for the final call to arms.

"No, Douglas, I would not try an apology—it

would be like tossing bouquets at an angry bull. Just go to bed, old boy, and take all the rest you can get and let me try to figure out this equation myself, won't you? If Hardin has been truly wronged we can stop the fight at any minute before the call of 'time' and offer an apology, but it 's my candid opinion that this explanation needs a little closer analysis to find out—well perhaps what was left unsaid. I will go around and see Karl Krumms about the business and when I come back I will expect to find you sound asleep," and without another word Rory swung out of the tent and was gone.

Douglas tossed the explanation back upon his locker in despair. "I will have to let events take their course," he mused impatiently, "for I am completely at sea as to what I should do. In spite of the statement on that explanation, I can't help believing that something was wrong down on No. 4, but like the 'goat'¹ I am, I 've lost the point and Hardin may put me before the corps as the fellow who uses his official position to persecute a class-mate."

¹ "Goat."—Name applied to a cadet who is at or near the bottom of his class in studies.

Douglas flung his bedding upon the floor with a vehemence which corresponded to his passionate thoughts. Each moment increased the burden of his position. To his utter astonishment, old level-headed Adamson had raised the standard of revolt for Smoke, and one-half of the class had jumped to the side of the insurgents at the class meeting which had just dispersed. Only by casting his individual vote had he been able to prevent the sanctioning of an unjust punishment for Mr. Hart and thus putting the stamp of class approval upon a most reprehensible proceeding. It is true that the vote was taken upon a principle—the accountability of any man for the words he dares to speak, and not the merits of the case of Smoke vs. Hart, but had the plebe been called out the principle would have been forgotten and the bare fact would have remained that a plebe could be licked for faithfully doing a duty which necessitated the punishment of an upper classman. It had always been an honored tradition of the Military Academy that no man was worthy of the gray who would falter in the performance of any duty involving his honor, yet to-night it required but

one additional vote to declare that a plebe could exercise this privilege only at his peril.

The traditions of the corps had been sustained, but still the class was angry through and through; for while a bare majority disapproved of a fight between Smoke and Mr. Hart, yet all were incensed at the immunity from punishment which the plebes seemed to enjoy. In every question which had come up since the beginning of camp, the plebes seemed to have won the sympathy of their superiors, while upper classmen were suffering the severest penalties for offenses which seemed trivial.

"And Mr. Hart's case is another added to the list," said Smoke vehemently as he stood among a disgruntled group of his classmates. "He is escaping punishment through the interference of the most cringing 'boot-lick' in the Academy. We've got to down such fellows as Atwell, who'd sell the corps for their chevrons, for if we don't the plebes will soon be making us police up their tents and clean their guns."

In this violent manner Hardin and Smoke everywhere preached the gospel of revolt and with a success which was truly alarming. It

would require all the courage and self-reliance of Douglas and his friends to stem the rising tide of disaffection and prevent the class from doing things which they would never cease to regret.

"A single false step would be fatal now," mused our young friend as he blew out the candles and drew the blankets over him, "and I may be taking that false step by fighting Hardin, but it is beyond me to decide: I must leave it to Rory."

But when the latter returned to his tent a few minutes before ten o'clock he too was undecided and anxiously asked himself whether to advise peace or war, and "taps" found him crawling beneath the covers as anxious for moral support as the stalwart lad who lay sleeping beside him.

"All in, sir," he said softly as the glow of Cadet Lieutenant Sharp's lantern swept over the tent-floor, and then he clasped his hands behind his head and mentally assailed the problem with which Douglas had entrusted him. The silvery light of the moon poured through the V-shaped front of the tent and lit up the outlines of a small wooden box which stood upon the top of the locker. Therein lay Hardin's official explanation of his

failure to stop a party entering camp across his post, and Roderick's opinion on the justice of this written statement must decide the conduct of his tent-mate, and he well knew that a mistake would receive but small courtesy from the angered class.

The lad's eyes were fixed upon the object in front with an intentness which made his head ache, but what he saw was not a wooden box-form lit up by the pale-faced moon but rather the written document within over which his mind's eye wandered again and again, and each time he completed his mental review with the following conclusion: "Yes, Douglas is wrong. He has made a terrible blunder, and I have helped to commit the worst kind of an injury to a cadet. An apology will not be understood, and a fight will only aggravate the injury already done to Hardin. If no one crossed that post . . ."

Rory paused in his mental train and sat up with a start. In an instant he had pulled the box upon the floor and had spread the explanation out into the full light of the moon. Beneath that brilliant silvery glow Roderick once more eagerly scanned the words of the explanation: . . .

"No person entered camp across my post either with or without authority while I was on guard."

"Yes, Hardin, you 're right," he muttered savagely. "No one did enter camp across your post. Every word you say is full truth, but you 'll get your hide pelted for it just the same to-morrow morning and you richly deserve it. There 'll be no apology for you, you old pirate," and Rory gently dropped the explanation back into the box, and cautiously set an alarm clock to wake him at 3:30 a. m.

All the arrangements for the fight had been completed, for Roderick had concluded that it could not be avoided even if Douglas apologized at the last moment, and from the very first he felt that he would discover something more in Hardin's explanation than the mere import of the words.

"And there it is," mused Rory. "The chance of a mistake is too small to be considered. I 'm for the fight." And with this satisfactory conclusion, Rory rolled over in his blankets and went to sleep.

The first pale streaks of dawn were visible along the purple-crowned Highlands when Karl

Krumms tiptoed softly into the tent and waked Rory. The latter seized his alarm clock and turned forward the alarm index so as to prevent Douglas from being disturbed until the last moment, while he and Karl whispered the final arrangements for the battle.

"I feel sick with anxiety," said Karl through his chattering teeth as he shivered in the cold morning breeze which was creeping over the sleeping figures; "if that big grizzly has half as much science as weight he 'll crush poor little Douglas like an egg-shell."

"I'll bet Douglas will go through him like a young wild cat," replied Rory with supreme confidence. "Last year Hadley was the best boxer in the yearling class, yet we saw Douglas smother him in less than two rounds, and I'm no judge of men if old grizzly Bill does n't get a licking this morning that he'll never forget."

"I hope so, I hope so," said Karl eagerly. "At any rate," replied Rory, "the time's up, and we've got to wake Douglas. He went to sleep without knowing that he was to fight." So saying, Rory gently shook his faithful friend, whose troubles were his, whose success was dear to his heart.

Douglas sprang to his feet and smiled as he saw the gruesome paraphernalia of the ring which Karl had brought to the tent, and then without a word he hastily dressed for his second trial on the field of honor. From the upper stretcher he drew forth the old plebe trousers, and as he snapped an elastic band around his ankles just above the tops of his rubber-soled shoes, he noted with a grim smile the faded blood-stains which recalled that gruelling affair with Hadley the year before. No time for hesitation now, he drew on his blouse over a sleeveless jersey and stepped out into the company street with his two loyal friends.

It was still quite dark and there was no difficulty in approaching No. 3 unseen. A plebe was slowly pacing his post in the rear of the A company tents when the party arrived opposite the head of the street and paused in the deep shadows of the trees to await the sentry's passing.

"Come on, it's safe now," whispered Rory as the sentinel passed into the darkest portion of his post just opposite the water tank; "we'll cross before he turns to come back."

Not a sound reached the stupid plebe's ears as the three men tiptoed across his post and entered Fort Clinton undiscovered. This famous battleground on which generations of cadets had fought out their differences, was no longer a safe retreat for fistic encounters. The vigilance of the "Tacs." had made it necessary to adopt another rendezvous, so Douglas and his seconds were now gliding along the interior revetment toward the scene of Kosciusko's monument. As they reached this point where the great Pole, accompanied by Washington and Lafayette, had stood and gazed upon the fruits of their toil for freedom's sake, the three lads scaled the parapet and descended into the road. Cunningham and Barlow of the first class were already there, selected respectively as referee and timekeeper under the recognized principle at West Point that these officials should, if possible, belong to a class which was not interested in the dispute between the principals.

While they were still roughly marking off a ring, Hardin and Smoke appeared in the road accompanied by Hacker, who it will be remembered was officer of the guard on the night that

Douglas entered his report against Hardin. It was quite an unusual thing for a first classman to take such active interest in the outcome of a yearling fight, but Hacker had interests at stake and had therefore volunteered his services as Hardin's second and confidential adviser.

It was no time now for speculation upon the motives of the big first classman, for the light was fast breaking in the East and Douglas and Hardin were rapidly dressing in their respective corners. The moon, sick and pale-faced in the presence of the rosy dawn, was just sinking in the west when Cunningham walked to the centre of the ring and invited attention to the rules of the fight. Then he stepped back and all was ready for the test of strength and courage.

"Thirty seconds," said the timekeeper, and Rory kneaded the muscles of his tent-mate as he whispered his final instructions. "No rushing this time, Douglas, and when you get in hit with all your might and get away quick."

"Yes, yes, I understand," said Douglas, as his chest heaved and his steel-like muscles quivered.

"Twenty seconds," said the timekeeper.

"He 'll rush you furiously," continued Karl,

"but you must n't lose your temper and come to close quarters. Wait for your opening, mind you, wait."

"Ten seconds," came the voice of the time-keeper clear and sharp, "nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, TIME!"

Douglas flung off the blouse which had been hanging from his shoulders, and moved cautiously and crouchingly forward. There was no preliminary hand-shake, for this was no boxing match but a fight to a finish with bare knuckles, in which courage to suffer punishment more than science was on trial.

Hardin was visibly nervous as he advanced from his corner and faced his opponent, but Rory's heart sank as he noted the bulk of the man, his great shoulders and the width and depth of his chest. He outweighed Douglas by twenty-five pounds, and confident in his ability to crush down his lighter opponent by superior weight, Hardin sprang forward and threw all his strength into a swinging, crushing blow. Douglas dropped upon his hands, and as the clenched fist shot harmlessly above his head, he sprang forward beneath his opponent's guard and drove

three terrific, lightning blows into Hardin's unprotected body.

With a grunt the big fellow staggered back, and turning with scowling face and set teeth he dashed madly after Douglas as the latter danced away to the other side of the ring.

"Keep away, keep away," whispered Rory as Douglas sprang past him, the very embodiment of agility and vigilance. Like a toreador watching the keen horns of the bull which could tear him to shreds, Douglas raced about the ring, side-stepping, feinting, retreating, waiting, always waiting for his chance. If his bulky opponent would but commit himself by a single error, those lithe muscles which played like whipcords across his chest and back would drive home the shattering blows which would stretch Hardin limp and helpless upon the battlefield.

"Good, good!" exclaimed Karl, as Douglas once more evaded the furious rush of his opponent and drove in a sharp blow as he got away from danger.

Hardin was in a frenzy. The round was nearly over and he had not yet landed a single effective

blow. With a supreme effort, however, he drove Douglas into his own corner, and with towering passion in his voice shouted, "Now, you little coward, stand up and fight." Hardin rushed forward, and the dust rose from beneath Douglas' toes as he leaped in to meet him and swung with all his strength upon his opponent's unprotected jaw.

Down sank Hardin, first upon his knees, and then upon his face, his whole body limp and quivering, and Cunningham rushed to his side and began counting off the seconds: "one, two, three. . . ."

"Get up, Hardin, get up and fight," yelled Hacker, fiercely, but the big yearling merely rolled about like a stricken fowl, while Douglas stood back waiting with the watchfulness of the hawk to renew the attack.

"Four, five, six, seven, eight. . . ." Douglas held his breath while Hardin struggled to rise. Two seconds more and victory would be his.

"Time!" shouted Barlow. The round was over, and Hardin was saved for the moment.

"But he 's whipped, he 's whipped sure as fate, Douglas." said Karl joyfully, as the former

stepped back to his corner and seized a dipper of water to rinse out his parched mouth.

"He's not out yet," said Rory, as the big yearling again got his bearings, "but you can finish him now, Dug. Fly at him and give him no chance to rest. Take all the punishment he can give but return twice as much and the fight will be over in a minute."

Hacker and Smoke had half-dragged Hardin to his corner and while the former furiously chafed his muscles and called upon him to get up and fight, the latter bathed his head and furtively watched the timekeeper. Thirty seconds of the precious minute of rest had passed when Hardin rose to his feet and pawed at the cobwebs which that terrific blow had placed before his eyes. Again came the timekeeper's slow count, and with clenched fists and rigid muscles Douglas waited for the final second. There was no mercy in his heart for his dizzy enemy as he braced his foot against Rory's shoe and leaped forward like a sprinter at the call of "time."

Hardin had scarcely raised his hands when Douglas was upon him raining blows upon his body and face with such fierceness and rapidity

that the eye could scarcely follow the lightning strokes. There was no retreating now. Close up to his antagonist chest to chest, shoulder to shoulder, Douglas drove in his body blows until Hardin doubled up and presented his face to the furious assault. Gasping and bleeding, the big fellow staggered back and was knocked headlong into the arms of his seconds.

"Fight it out," growled Hacker as he pushed him back into the ring to renew the vain struggle.

With all his muscles drawn for the effort, Douglas met him with a swinging blow which landed with terrific force on the point of the jaw.

As the soldier, mortally wounded, turns with refuge instinct and flees toward the point of safety, so Hardin whirled about and reeled toward his corner. In vain Hacker called upon him as he sank upon his face, and once more Cunningham began his steady count; "one, two, three, four. . . ."

Standing over his fallen and defeated foe, Douglas suddenly raised a startled glance to his tent-mate's face as he exclaimed, "Rory, why are you here? You are supposed to be confined to camp."

"Great Jehoshaphat! I forgot," cried Rory.

Douglas had reached his side with one leap and had flung him behind the angle of the Fort which juts out into the road. "Run for your life," he commanded, "there comes Captain Skinner."

Across the ring dashed Smoke, over the body of his principal, and around the corner at which Rory had disappeared. The latter had halted, resolved to remain at the ring-side at all hazards, when Sam crashed into him in his frantic effort to escape, and both rolled headlong to the ground, their caps flying off together. Smoke jumped to his feet and actually stepped on Rory in his struggle to secure a foothold and scramble up the side of the parapet. One parting glance he cast at his friend who lay panting and bleeding in the roadside, and then Smoke leaped over the parapet and raced bareheaded for camp. Rory picked up a cap and with a low chuckle jumped behind a friendly tree to await developments.

Seizing the fleeting opportunity of the moment of confusion, Hacker had jumped into the ring to assist Hardin to his feet, but Cunningham was beside him in an instant.

"Stand back," said he sharply, and with his hand firmly clutching the big first classman's arm, he counted steadily on, "seven, eight, nine, ten. It 's Atwell's fight." And then as if on parade, he stepped back and came to attention as Captain Skinner approached.

"What are you doing here, Mr. Cunningham?" said the tactical officer.

"Refereeing this fight, sir."

"And you, Mr. Barlow?"

"Timekeeper, sir."

"The rest are seconds, etc., I suppose, or participants in one way or other," continued the captain as he glanced about. "Well, have this injured man taken to the hospital—but one moment. I think I saw some one running away as I approached. Who was it?"

No one spoke and Captain Skinner turned sharply to Douglas. "Who was it, Mr. Atwell?"

"I can't answer that question, sir," said Douglas firmly.

The captain glanced at his blood-stained face and then at the big opponent whom he had just defeated. "Very well," said he. "Return to camp, all of you, by way of the guard-tent, and go to your respective companies in arrest."

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And then as Captain Skinner turned back to camp, Rory O'Connor stepped out from his place of concealment to congratulate his tent-mate on the victory he had so gallantly won

CHAPTER VIII

REDUCED TO THE RANKS



WHEN Douglas returned to camp by way of the guard-tent after his sensational defeat of Bill Hardin, Rory, who had successfully evaded the sentinel on post, stood chuckling beneath the tent-flaps and waiting to receive him.

"Ha, ha, Douglas," he laughed, "you made old Bill look like a punching bag. Jump in here, you little dandy, and let me mop off your face. Great Scott, was n't that a hurricane. Did Bill touch you at all?"

"Yes," said Douglas, "I scarcely felt it at the time, but he did land three or four times on my face and twice on my body, but not with enough force to bother me. Bill never knew where he was after that little speech in the first round. About that time, the sun and moon and stars began to play tag, the trees began to walk in the sky, and the ground began flying after the trees.

It was a terrible thing, Rory," continued Douglas with a sudden change of manner, "and I will never cease to regret it if I made a mistake."

"You made no mistake," said Rory, decisively. "I looked over that explanation very carefully and I'll risk my bell buttons that Bill got just what he richly deserved. I am not going to trouble you with the whys and the wherefores, but Hardin's explanation suggests the chance of some very interesting revelations. From this new point of view, all that happened the night you were on guard becomes as clear as daylight."

Douglas waited with breathless interest but Rory said no more, and he, therefore, repressed his curiosity, for it was part of his creed never to force a confidence. "By the way," broke off Rory suddenly as he tenderly dried and massaged his tent-mate's face, "what happened at the ring-side after I retired? Smoke came along with me you know and actually trampled on my neck in his haste to get away. I imagine that he and Bill will not be such good friends when Hardin learns how shamefully he was abandoned on the battle-field. I was surprised, however, to see that Hacker stuck to his post like a rock."

"And tried to interfere before the call of time and save Hardin from defeat, but Cunningham brought him up with a round turn and faithfully counted Bill out instead of breaking like a coward for cover and giving no decision. This gave Captain Skinner time to get right on top of us, and of course we 're all in arrest as you know."

"What did Captain Skinner say?" asked Rory eagerly. "I could n't quite catch the conversation from my snug hiding-place."

"Why, he wanted to know who ran away from the ring-side," said Douglas.

Rory's eyes dilated. "What did you tell him?"

"I refused to answer."

"Great Scott, Douglas, was n't it bad enough to be caught in a fight without inviting more trouble?" and Rory snapped up his cap. "I will go down and tell Captain Skinner at once that I was there."

"Not a step," said Douglas firmly. "If Captain Skinner wants to know who was there let him find out. I will not tell him if it costs my dismissal from the academy. I clean forgot that you were confined to camp and stupidly allowed

you to come out as my second. Well, your generosity to me is not going to get you into further trouble, so don't stir an inch from this tent."

Rory tossed his cap back upon the bedding with a sigh. "All right, Dug.," said he. "I suppose it would do no good any way, but I hate to see you punished on my account. Have you any idea as to the treatment the wicked participants are likely to receive?"

"I don't know," said Douglas, "but so long as I am in the right, I can take it cheerfully. Where is that explanation of Hardin's? I must put on the indorsement."

"Here it is," said Rory as he drew the official document from his locker. "All that Bill says is true, but he's a fanciful chap, don't you know, and leaves a lot to the imagination. You better just relate the circumstances in your indorsement, and Bill will probably be forced to explain further. I predict some interesting fiction as a result."

Douglas seated himself on a cleaning box, spread the paper on the top of his locker, and then with the hand which had dealt Hardin such fearful blows but half an hour before, he dashed

off the following on the second fold of this important paper:

"WEST POINT, N. Y.,

"July

"Respectfully returned.

"At about 10:45 p. m. on the—inst. while inspecting the sentinel on No. 5, I heard Cadet Hardin challenge and I immediately went to his post. No one was in sight and I asked him if he had stopped the party whom he had challenged, to which he replied in the negative. I asked him why, but he refused to answer. I believed that some one had entered camp across his post and accordingly submitted the report within.

"DOUGLAS ATWELL,

"Cadet Corporal, 3rd Class."

Then Douglas folded up the official paper, took his morning shave, and at the first call for reveille, dressed as neatly as for parade, he was ready to step out into the company street for roll-call. Only a few in camp had known when the fight was to occur, but the news that it had occurred spread like wild-fire through the awakened camp. "And Bill Hardin was simply annihilated in less than two rounds—looks like a last year's bird's nest with the bottom knocked out,"

said Zeke Shanks, enthusiastically. "Why, little Dug. simply ate him alive."

"Good for him, good for the big bully," whispered the plebes as the news ran down the line. "I hope Mr. Atwell is not hurt."

And then little Dalton dashed into the tent and seized Douglas by the hand. "Congratulations, old boy," said he, "I never was more pleased in my life. If Smoke has a word to say give him the same medicine."

In a few moments the tent was surrounded and the plebes were peering cautiously from beneath their tent-flaps, while the recipient of all this attention was beside himself with delight to witness the outburst of feeling in his favor which the incident had produced. The crushing defeat of a man who outweighed him by twenty-five pounds had inspired admiration for his courage and prowess, but the refusal to answer Captain Skinner's questions at the risk of his chevrons, had made him a hero.

"Now we all know," said Adamson, impressively, "that you are acting on dead-straight principles and that you are not merely 'boning chevrons,' and while some of us may not agree with you, we all respect your convictions: and

say, Douglas," he went on in a low tone, "I 'm right glad that you won that decision over me the other night at the class-meeting."

The lad's heart swelled within him as he heard this honest confession, and as he walked to his place in ranks, followed by the eyes of every man in the company, he felt that he had leaped in one bound into a position to command the leadership of the class which Adamson had so nearly wrested from him, and to force his comrades to follow him in his stand against hazing.

There was neither disgrace nor humiliation in the situation as he took his place in the file-closers—a non-commissioned officer in arrest. Whatever his punishment might be for participating in this fight and refusing to compromise a class-mate, Douglas knew that he would lose nothing in standing before the corps of cadets.

The assembly sounded, the companies fell into ranks, and while the first sergeants were calling the rolls four attendants carried Hardin away to the hospital on a stretcher and Sam Smoke glanced furtively after them resolved to indefinitely postpone the honor of whipping Douglas Atwell.

Douglas was tired, his face and hands were

bruised and sore, but he felt that he must conceal all indications of suffering and do his full duty without a murmur. The first drill-call of the day, therefore, found him ready for duty, but before the assembly sounded an orderly searched him out from among an admiring group of friends and informed him that the commandant wanted to see him immediately.

"There go Cunningham and Barlow—it's another investigation," said Rory, "but keep a stiff upper lip, Douglas, and remember that I am only waiting for the chance to share any punishment with you. I'll be lonesome, don't you know, if you don't let me in."

"But who would bother the lads for a wee bit of a scrimmage of only two rounds," continued Rory pleadingly as his face assumed a humorous expression; "a long and tedious punishment would be out of all harmony with the shortness of the fight."

"Fine logic, Rory, but I am nevertheless anxious," said Marley. "You know that the Tacs. have been on the lookout for pre-arranged fights and here the participants were caught red-handed, and I am afraid they may be used as an example."

But when the young enthusiastic fellows rushed back to camp after drill, Douglas had returned from the commandant's tent with the feeling that he would be only nominally disciplined.

"The only man I am afraid of is Captain Skinner. He was there and camping on my trail, and from the expression on his face I should judge that he wants me roughly handled for declining to answer his questions, but the commandant seems to treat the matter lightly. Though the officers must have known about a great many fights that took place last year, yet no one was actually caught, so I 'm the first victim and ought, therefore, to be gently dealt with."

In this frame of mind Douglas fell in with his class-mates at ten o'clock for instruction in target practice. Each year the importance of this work had been increasing until, at the period covered by this narrative, a value had been assigned to the course and it had been grouped with riding, etc., under the head of military efficiency. Only the first class was arranged according to merit in this subject, yet a high place in the matters covered by military efficiency was eagerly desired by every yearling and none desired this distinction more than Douglas himself. As a

boy on the farm he had handled a gun from the earliest days of his youth, and had learned to drop a quail on the wing or knock over a rabbit in front of the hounds with as much dexterity as the oldest shots in the district. This was an excellent preliminary school of training for the much more difficult art of shooting with the military rifle, and Douglas had learned his lesson well.

Unusual interest attached to the work of this morning moreover, for preliminary instruction was over and the yearling class was to begin shooting for record. It was, therefore, an enthusiastic and excited group of youngsters who reported at the target flats on this beautiful July morning.

Captain Skinner was in charge, having come direct from the office of the commandant where he had just heard Douglas freely admit his part in the fight and the circumstances which led up to it, but again decline to say who was with him at the ring-side. There was just the slightest suspicion of an insinuation in the officer's glance as he turned to the detachment with the words: "The last six men on the left fall out and go to

the butts to mark; Mr. Atwell, Mr. O'Connor, and Mr. Smoke, with their rear-rank files, fall in at the firing point."

Douglas glanced towards his comrades as he stepped forward and noticed that Roderick's face wore an expression of ill-concealed mirth, while Smoke was painfully flushed and nervous. The effect on Douglas was to awaken his determination, steady his muscles, and dispel the last feeling of anxiety. His arms were sore and bruised, his face battered and discolored in spots, and his head was aching with a slow, dull pain, but when the red flags disappeared behind the butts and the targets rose together, he tossed up his rifle with steady hand and braced himself for the fire.

The range was 200 yards, the firing in the standing position. The course which the yearlings were to pursue as far as possible, included further firing at 300 yards in the sitting or kneeling position, and at 500 and 600 yards in the "prone," closing with two skirmish runs of 20 rounds each, fired while advancing from 600 to 200 yards at a group of silhouettes representing the kneeling and prone figures of a man. The attainment of 60% in this course would confer

upon the cadet the title of marksman, while those who qualified in this test would probably be permitted to try for sharpshooter at 800 and 1000 yards.

It was this distinction for which Douglas had resolved to struggle and he was now before the targets for the first record round of the course. As the bull's eye stood out over his sights, all thought of Bill Hardin and Sam Smoke, of pains and bruises, passed from his mind, and he pressed the rifle to his shoulder with a grip like steel. A short suspension of the breath, a firm steady pressure on the trigger, and as the black settled into the rear sight notch, the rifle leaped backward with a sharp crack, and the dust rose from behind the target.

Roderick and Smoke had fired at almost the same instant, and the targets were now sinking into the pits for examination. Then the red disk rose in front of Douglas' post and settled just beneath the bull's eye.

"Atwell, 4-6 o'clock," said the scorer and the delighted young rifleman lowered his piece and glanced to the left as the other shots were marked.

"Smoke, 2," called the next scorer as a black disk rose into the upper right hand corner of the target, but for Rory there was only a red flag. He had made a clean miss.

King, Shannon and Drake fired next, netting 3, 3, and 4, and once more Douglas and his group raised their rifles. The boy was steady as a rock now. It was simply a question of the eye and pull, and with eager huntsman's sense he hung to the bull's eye and held hard. Crack!

The target shot down in an instant and up rose the white disk square over the centre of the bull's eye.

"Atwell, 5," said the scorer, and a murmur of approval ran through the class. Smoke made a 3 and Roderick pulled into the centre with a close 4. He was getting his nerve, but Smoke was wabbling all over the target and getting on only by pure chance, while the look in his face indicated that he was suffering an intense mental strain. His affiliations with Hardin had led him into a situation devoid of honor and full of peril, and with the utter defeat of Hardin and his own ignominious flight to safety he had lost all appearance of success, and he was utterly miserable

and forlorn. The affair with Mr. Hart, the strong support that had rallied to his cause as a result of Adamson's speech, had made him for a moment a leader of the rebellious element among the yearlings, but only to be dethroned by the growing suspicion of the class that he had partially falsified in relating the scene with Mr. Hart. And all this had happened on the very day that Rory O'Connor's chevrons had been awarded him, and how had he won them? Sam Smoke's face was aflame and the perspiration rolled down his cheeks as these thoughts raced through his mind and he tried once more to hold his rifle on the dizzy target. It was useless. His knees were trembling, his hand shook, and in sheer desperation he convulsively pulled the trigger. The dust appeared fifty yards in front, and the deformed bullet rose with a howl and sailed high over the tree-tops behind the butts.

"Atwell, 4; Smoke, a miss; O'Connor, 5."

Rory had made a bull's eye, but his happy smile vanished as he glanced at Smoke. "Looks as if some one had bitten his dog," he mused. "I wish that Douglas would take a look at that face."

But Douglas had his eyes straight to the front and neither knew nor cared what Smoke was

making. Though the whole class was watching him as he raised his rifle he might as well have been alone in the heart of a desert for but one thought commanded his mind—the black spot on the face of the target.

“And he ’s hit it again,” exclaimed a class-mate as the white disk rose once more and settled over the bull’s eye.

Thus the work progressed until each man had fired ten shots, and then as Douglas turned away, he saw Captain Skinner watching him attentively. “That is fine shooting, Mr. Atwell,” said he, “your score is 45.”

“And mine is 36,” said Rory cheerfully as Douglas joined him. “Did you notice what old Smoke made?”

“No,” said Douglas, “I almost forgot that he was shooting.”

“So did Smoke. He did n’t know whether he was ashore or afloat. I feel sorry for that boy. He ’s about as comfortable as a fellow who puts on a pair of trousers after a wasp has staked out a claim on the inside of one of the legs. I did that once and I can sympathize with Samuel. He knocked out a grand total of 21.”

The two good friends withdrew a short dis-

tance from the rest of the class and exchanged their views as to Sam's peculiar behavior, and as a result of this conference it was agreed to watch "the new corporal" most attentively for the remainder of camp. The rest of the class completed their work, and then the detachment fell in at 12:15 p. m. and marched back to camp. The score made by Douglas was not only the best of the day but also the best made by any cadet of either class since the beginning of the season. Big Zeke Shanks, who had spent his youth in the mountains of the northwest, was second with a score of 42, while Sam Smoke occupied a place all by himself at the bottom of the list.

Upon return to camp, it was learned that the commandant had completed his investigation into the fight, and that every one hoped for unusual leniency. However, a number of additional witnesses had been called, among them the plebe on No. 3, to discover the identity of the two seconds who had escaped from the ring-side.

"Of course it is of no interest to me," said Rory, "but what luck did the commandant have along that line?"

"Well," said Marley, "one of the fellows who got away dropped his cap and the commandant has it on his desk. The cap has no name marked upon it, but every company has been inspected and all men who wear a No. 7 are under suspicion."

Smoke turned a sickly pallor, and Roderick snapped the cap from his head and gasped as he glanced inside. "Great Jehoshaphat!" said he. "Here Smoke, take your infernal top-piece, it has given me the buck fever all morning and made me shoot like a Vassar girl. Why, my dear Smoke, I would not have poked my head into the sacred hatching place of your thoughts for anything in the world. Take your cap quick. We got them mixed about the time you concluded to return to camp and I accidentally picked up yours instead of my own. That puts you safe, don't you know, for the Com. has mine on his desk."

With an expression of humorous horror on his face, Roderick turned to his tent. There was just that element of danger, uncertainty and expectancy in the situation which made Rory feel that life was still worth the living even though he could not go to the hops or approach nearer than

the color line to the fair friends who so regretted his absence.

But this time Roderick was to be favored by fortune, for though Captain Skinner left no honorable means untried and felt morally certain of his case, yet when the first call for parade sounded that evening, no actual testimony had been secured as to the identity of the captured head-gear.

Parade ran along in the same smooth routine manner, the band played its best, and the visitors' seats were never more prettily thronged. The manual had been completed and Maitland was advancing to publish the orders. Standing in the file-closers of the company, Douglas had forgotten all the excitement and anxiety of the last two days in the dreamy quiet that steals over the waiting ranks. He was vaguely conscious that Maitland was reading from a bunch of orders when his heart jumped and his head whirled as he heard the following:

"For having engaged in a prearranged fight with another cadet in violation of the regulation of the United States Military Academy, the appointment of Cadet Douglas Atwell, third class, as a corporal in the Battalion of

Cadets is hereby revoked. He is also confined to that portion of the encampment east of the color line until the 28th of August, and will walk two tours of extra duty each Wednesday and Saturday afternoon during the same period.

"Cadet Atwell is hereby released from arrest."

The order continued distributing punishments with equal measure to all who were known to be present at the fight, but Douglas heard no more. He had expected to suffer some punishment, but this exceeded in severity anything that he had even vaguely imagined. Had he faltered like a coward on that night when he felt himself in duty bound to go to Hardin's post, he might still be wearing the badge of rank in which he felt such a deep pride. Had he reported Hardin for challenging him to a fight, he would have been entirely within his rights—a course, however, which his whole heart despised. Instead, he had done a disagreeable duty fearlessly and well; and with a courage that never faltered he had allowed himself to be forced into a fight by a man whom every one considered an undisciplined bully. Throughout this affair he could find himself guilty of no act which unfitted him for the chev-

rons of a corporal, yet here was an end of it all—reduction to the ranks and humiliation before two hundred spectators

Never in his life did Douglas feel more crushed and friendless. The tears trembled on his eyelids but he choked them back, and when the ranks broke in the company street fifteen minutes later, no look or tone betrayed the depths to which he had been wounded. Calmly and indifferently he removed the chevrons from his sleeves, just as Rory had done the night before, and then these two friends who had started out in yearling year with such brilliant prospects of success, stepped into ranks once more as privates to begin anew the struggle for honorable distinction.

There was no ostentatious show of sympathy among class-mates, but rather a quiet, regretful look in nearly every face which spoke volumes where words would have failed. That night every table in the mess-hall talked of but one theme—the fight and its penalty, and when the ranks swung into line on return to camp, a few fiery heads had resolved to express their pent-up feelings.

“It was the gamest, nerviest fight on record,”

said a yearling as a group gathered around him in the company street. "Atwell could have sneaked out of trouble and played his office like some high-ranking chevrons we all know of, but he acted on principle, fought like a hero and refused to 'peach.' Boys, let 's show him that we appreciate his pluck. Corps yell and three Atwells on the end;" and instantly the air was rent with the sound—"Rah, rah, ray; rah, rah, ray; West Point, West Point, Armee; ray, ray, ray, U. S. M. A., West Point, Atwell, Atwell, Atwell!"

Douglas heard it in his tent and the chills raced over him and left him pale and trembling. This was convincing proof of approbation, but for the boys to combine in such an expression of approbation for a punished cadet was bordering close on mutinous conduct, and our young friend's experience in the army had taught him the fearful gravity of such an offense. The call had been given absolutely without his knowledge or consent, but would the commandant believe him responsible for inspiring this audacious act?

CHAPTER IX

DOUGLAS WALKS HIS LAST PUNISHMENT TOUR UNDER CADET CORPORAL SMOKE



T was the 28th of August. The yearlings and first classmen crowded to the ends of the company streets, and eagerly watched for the first appearance of the returning furloughmen. The train from the North had just arrived at the railroad station, and a few distant cheers rolling up along the bluff to the cadet encampment, indicated the arrival of the first groups. Ever since the 12th of June, these happy fellows had been absent on the only furlough which is granted the cadet during the four years of his arduous life.

But this happy period was over; the comfortable "cits" must give place to the corset-like dress-coat; the laughing, random stroll, to the cadenced tread in ranks; the joyous freedom of care-free days to the heartless grind of the academic mill. The thought brought a choking sen-

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sation to Douglas Atwell's throat as he stood watching the corner of the academic building for the approach of the second class, because to him, too, the grind must soon be renewed and he felt unequal to the task. Following close upon the heels of that yearning for the joys to which his class would next fall heir, came the realization that he had no right to hope for participation, for he was a "goat," barely proficient in the examination of the preceding June and fully alive to his inability to improve upon his previous performance. Moreover, the chevrons which he had won so deservedly and worn with so much pride, were gone, forfeited for participating in the fight with Bill Hardin, and he was back at the starting point in his official career—a private in the ranks.

The summer, begun with such brilliant prospects of success, had terminated in disaster, and the future seemed full of danger. In spite of all his efforts, Douglas had not been able to control the resentment of his class-mates against the effort to stop hazing at the Military Academy. The vigilance of the "Tacs." had led to still greater vigilance on the part of the yearlings, and ingenious forms of hazing had been devised which

could be practised without the fear of discovery within a dozen paces of the most watchful officer in the department. As a consequence, hazing had never before been carried to greater excesses, and the rebellious yearlings openly laughed at all talk of suppressing the vice. "It is my opinion," said one of them at a class meeting, "that no plebe can be properly trained without jumping him both in and out of ranks, every day and all the time, just as hard as you can, from the minute he reports to the minute he becomes a yearling, and I personally resent any effort to overthrow the customs which I believe to be the underlying cause of the efficiency of the academy."

After an expression of opinion such as this, spoken in fiery earnest, the qualified dissent of an unpopular minority would have received but slight courtesy.

The plebes on the other hand had taken advantage of the situation to show their objection to personal control, and the efforts of Douglas were of no avail to stop the furious fights for which the camp had become famous. No less than six plebes had gone down to defeat since the night that Mr. Hart had been spared the same fate at the hands of Sam Smoke.

Looking backward, then, Douglas could see only a long list of failures to carry out his original determination, and looking forward, he could see no hope of ultimate success. To fail in a project on which he had set his mind was most humiliating to a lad of Douglas Atwell's temperament, but to know that the Tactical Department believed him responsible for the results was absolutely intolerable. With his whole heart he had supported the policy of his superiors because he believed himself in honor bound to do so, yet the approaching end of camp found him a victim of official suspicion and distrust.

"There is just one man in the second class," mused Douglas as these thoughts raced through his mind, "who can mould the opinion of the upper classes and bring their influence in favor of sane discipline, and here he comes." The last words were shouted at the top of his voice, thus giving audible expression to his thoughts: "That 's Swayne marching the furloughmen across the plain; the little dandy, you could n't mistake him among a thousand.'

A great cheer rose from the company streets, but the solid ranks of the approaching class gave

no outward signs of the pleasure it caused them. Unlike the custom of former years, it was no longer permitted to rush across the sentinel's posts and greet the furloughmen on the open plain, nor could the latter return as they pleased. Instead, they formed ranks at the railroad station, marched to the chapel steps to have that one great day in their history recorded by Barney's camera, and then they sadly packed away their "cits," and furlough days were over. All this had been accomplished on the day in question, and once more in gray blouse and white duck trousers, the furloughmen, under command of Cadet 1st Sergeant Swayne, were marching to camp for duty.

A few moments later they were swarming through the company streets and Douglas was gripping Swayne by the hand.

"By Jove, I 'm glad to see you, Atwell," said the latter warmly. "I read in the newspapers of your great victory over Hardin, and a garbled account of the circumstances that led up to it. Experience in last year's camp enabled me to supply the rest, and I can tell you that I felt glad through and through at the stand you took and

the gallant fight you made; but what 's this? What 's this? Where are your chevrons?"

"They busted me for the fight, Swayne," said Douglas, and in spite of his effort at self-control his voice betrayed the depth to which his pride had been wounded. "Not only was I busted for the fight," he went on, "but I was also sentenced to walk two tours of extra duty every Wednesday and Saturday afternoon until the 28th of August. This is my last day's punishment."

Swayne opened his eyes in astonishment. "That is mighty hard," he said forcibly, "but never mind, Atwell, never mind. They've got to do that sort of thing for the sake of discipline, but I'll bet that you have the sympathy of every Tac. in the department. At any rate if I have any influence with the second class you will come out all right before we part at your yearling furlough."

"Thank you, Swayne," said Douglas heartily.

"Where is O'Connor? I've heard that he was busted, too," Swayne abruptly demanded.

"Here I am," said Rory cheerfully, and Douglas turned to see him rushing forward arm in arm with Bobby MacGregor.

"Hello, scrapper Atwell, hello, you old battering ram," chuckled the latter as he approached Douglas with both hands outstretched. "It 's a cure for laziness such as I alone possess to look at you yearning for something to do. Well, I hear you trimmed old Bill Hardin in your usual matchless style and that it is as much as a man's life is worth to jump a plebe in your company. That 's right, that 's right, I highly commend this noble attitude. You well know, friend Atwell, that I would never allow a plebe to do a menial service for me, not I, sir; that I have frequently inveighed against this reprehensible custom until thrown into a lethargy from which only a 'cold lemo' would revive me," and Bobby tossed back his head and his jolly laughter was heard from end to end of the company street. During the entire preceding camp, Douglas had been Bobby's "extra-duty man,"¹ and no upper classman had exacted more from a "lusty son of toil."

In spite of his well-known reputation, Bobby was one of the most popular men of his class among the yearlings whose plebe services he had

¹ "Extra-duty man."—A plebe who does small favors for an upper classman.

so royally commanded. From every direction they rushed to shake his hand, while Bobby met them with a royal good fellowship which seemed to make their previous relations a privilege rather than a source of embarrassment.

Bobby had enjoyed a fine furlough. "Slept like a gentleman every morning till eight o'clock," said he in a grandiloquent manner, "fished, hunted, danced, and read the newspaper about the troubles of the poor West Point Cadets. Hello there, Zeke Shanks," he broke off suddenly as he sprang forward to meet the big yearling. "Do you remember that soirée over in D company when myself and several esteemed contemporaries undertook to sort out your feet and make them keep step with the bass drum?"

In a moment Bobby was surrounded by another group of yearlings who were keenly enjoying his reminiscences at Zeke's expense. Taking advantage of the diversion, Douglas turned to Swayne with the remark, "If you have made no provisions for camping to-night, O'Connor and I would be glad to furnish you bedding and a hard tent-floor to sleep upon."

"Thank you," said Swayne cordially, "I will be

with you and we 'll talk over the situation, for I 'm not going to the hop to-night. Here comes Black and I must see him about the formation for parade."

In his usual alert and business-like manner Swayne advanced along the company street with outstretched hand to meet the dandy little captain of B company. But though Billy Black was every inch a soldier, a single glance sufficed to show that Cadet 1st Sergeant Swayne was his superior in every detail. "Another inch in height would make him the dandiest 1st captain or adjutant that ever graced the bell-buttons," was the universal opinion of his class, "while ten pounds more in weight would make him as fine a quarterback as Douglas Atwell."

The latter looked after his rival for foot-ball honors with a feeling of deepest admiration and then turned to find himself in the presence of Kendrick and Mallory, to whom he had reported as a candidate.

The warmth and cordiality of their greeting, their solicitude for his welfare and future was a most gratifying assurance that he possessed two more good friends in the second class of whose

sympathy and support he felt he would soon stand in need. It was impossible, however, to prolong the pleasant conversation with them for the punishment squad was already assembling, and Douglas must report without delay. Rory joined him as he reached the parade-ground and together they hurried forward toward the guard-tent.

"Well, it 's my last tour," said Rory philosophically, "and I think the afternoon strolls have done me good," and then he came to a halt in his tracks. "Caesar's ghost! Look!" he exclaimed. "See who is to drive the squad to-day."

Douglas raised his eyes and flushed scarlet as he saw Sam Smoke, the corporal of the guard, awaiting the arrival of the squad. By a singular coincidence it had fallen to the lot of the only man who had abandoned the field during the fight with Hardin to post the participants in their last tour of extra duty in expiation of the offense. All that Douglas and Roderick had lost during the encampment Sam Smoke had won. Not only did Rory's chevrons now adorn his sleeve, but to the astonishment of every man in the yearling class, the re-arranged list of cadet officers, pub-

lished on the preceding evening, showed Smoke a high ranking corporal and indicated that he stood well in the esteem of the commandant of cadets. By a remarkable combination of circumstances he had completely escaped suspicion and stood at the end of camp among the few trusted officers of the yearling class.

"But I happen to know a few things about Smoke that the commandant never dreamed of," mused Douglas as he stepped into ranks, "and if—"

His chest heaved and he gripped his rifle as the thoughts raged through his mind, but he kept his eye straight to the front as the roll was called and the squad was made ready for its last tour of punishment. Then before the crowd of visitors that thronged the seats in front of camp, Douglas, Roderick, Hardin, Hacker, Cunningham and Barlow were marched away to be posted "as sentinels without charge" for four weary hours. Never had Douglas felt the position more keenly than now as Smoke posted him on the color-line within full view of the curious crowd. The usual embarrassment was exaggerated by the fact that among the most interested spectators were some

of Smoke's personal friends, whose curiosity he appeared to be gratifying to the full as he returned to the visitors' seats after "posting his convicts."

Hardin was located on Douglas' left, and judging from the scowl upon his face he was enjoying the situation no more than Douglas, but the latter was more capable of concealing his anger at Smoke's insolent conduct. As Rory had prophesied, Smoke's abandonment of his principal during the fight had practically terminated their friendship, but a partnership in certain affairs of the past forced them to continue the appearances of congeniality. Between them and Douglas there had been an armed truce ever since the battle, "but," mused our young friend as he paced his post under the burning sun of this August day, "the truce can't stand the strain much longer." Fortunately, however, Smoke's anxiety for the safety of his chevrons, which he was putting in jeopardy by these stolen moments at the visitors' seats, soon overcame his desire to deliver an underhand blow at an enemy, so he moved discreetly on to the guard-tent.

As for Hardin, he met Douglas whenever a

meeting could not be avoided in sullen and scowling silence. During the week he lay in the hospital recovering from the effect of his fight he had concluded that another encounter would end as badly as the first and he grimly accepted the situation. Contrary to Rory's expectation, his explanation of the affair on No. 4 had been accepted without a question, "but the document is still on file," asserted Rory, "and sooner or later Bill will be forced to finish that piece of romance and state the true story of that night on guard."

Yes, the document was still on file in the commandant's office, but so was Rory's cap and the latter was giving him much more concern at this precise moment than Hardin's explanation, for Captain Skinner had pursued his investigation with the restless energy of a sleuth and all camp anxiously awaited the outcome. Each day a few names seemed to be eliminated, and camp gossip declared that the number had been reduced to five and that Rory's name was among the chosen few. Should Captain Skinner be able to establish that Cadet Roderick O'Connor, while serving a confinement almost approaching the strictness of an arrest, had left camp to second a fight, the situation would be critical indeed.

“I can see a court-martial staring me in the face,” mused Rory. “I can feel my feet already sore from tours of extra duty on the area of barracks; I can see myself sitting like a caged rat in my room while other fellows are dancing at the hop and I . . .” And then a thought came flaming through his mind which made him tremble with inward delight, and when his two hours were up he sent in word to camp that he wanted to see “wee Bobby MacGregor at the end of the next lap.”

Ten minutes' rest were followed by the final period of steady marching, and then the punishment squad, foot-sore and weary, turned slowly back to camp.

Bobby MacGregor, ever keen to scent the possibilities of adventure, was waiting for Rory at the head of the company street, and the two were soon lost in an animated conversation.

The first call for parade sounded in a few moments, and Douglas made a stoic's effort to throw off the feeling of bitterness and resentment which the disappointments of the summer had caused him. He was glad to occupy an obscure place as a private in the rear rank with the plebes when the company formed for parade on this, the last

day of the camp's official existence. It was a charming spectacle before a charming array of spectators which had gathered to see the furloughmen back in ranks once more and to watch the new officers in their first public performance. Although the swelled ranks now stretched completely across the front of camp it was evident at a glance that the precision acquired by two years' service 'neath the Black and Gold and Gray had been practically ruined by two and one half months of yearling furlough. Swayne, however, had lost none of his superb bearing and as Douglas watched him with growing admiration, the feeling completely possessed him that this keen, alert, and dashing fellow was in some way identified with all his future. Half consciously he seemed to perceive in their relations a solution of the problems which had racked his brains and a promise of a future full of triumphs and happiness.

The joyousness of the dream was still upon him as the lines swept down the parade in review and broke into column to reform in the rear of the officers' tents for the publication of the delinquency list by Cadet Adjutant Maitland. As

Douglas stood in an entranced silence in ranks, a wagon drove up along the road to the east of No. 4, and a loud-tongued country driver hauled up his horse with a resounding "who-a."

"Say, Mister," he sang out at the top of his voice as Captain Skinner, the officer in charge, appeared in the vicinity of his tent, "kin ye' tell me whar t' find a feller they call Cadet Roary?"

For an instant Captain Skinner stood in contemptuous silence and then as a thought seemed to strike him he turned with becoming dignity to the country gentleman. "There is no such cadet in the Corps," said he, "but what do you happen to want with the man you name?"

"Why, I had this here wagon load o' stuff fur 'im, an' I wanted t' know whar t' take an' dump it," said the driver. "They tol' me I'd have to be a leetle skittish 'bout deliverin' th' goods, but—"

"Caesar's ghost!" muttered Rory, "it 's the 'boodle' I ordered from New York."

Bobby MacGregor's peal of laughter as he heard these words was cut short by Maitland's sharp command, "Battalion, Attention!" but above the music of the cadet adjutant's voice

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came the cackle of the countryman, "Wall, if ye say so, I 'll dump the hull sheebang right here. Them 's th' apples an' pears, an' peaches, an' cakes an' pies that th' feller ordered, an' by gosh it 's a lay-out fit fur a king, but if you 'll be responsible that it gits to th' proper person, off she comes."

In perfect silence the ranks stood while Rory's boxes were "dragged" up behind the lines and deposited one by one in Captain Skinner's tent, but when the command "Rest" was given, a perfect burst of laughter rang out from end to end of the line.

CHAPTER X

WEE BOBBY MACGREGOR CELEBRATES, AND RORY HIVES A FIRE



WHEN the battalion returned from supper on this, the last night of camp, Captain Skinner's tent-walls were battened down, and fifty dollars' worth of contraband which Rory had intended secreting for a series of clandestine feasts had been taken as a prize by the officer in charge. Dusk had already fallen and the sputtering candles threw their light upon a scene of intense activity, for this was the occasion of the furlough hop and dancing was to begin promptly at 8:15 p. m.

Swayne had declined the urgency of his friends to attend and was sitting in front of Douglas Atwell's tent discussing the merits of the excellent sketches which the latter was making on the back of numerous hop cards which he had generously volunteered to make out for less fortunate

penmen. "I 'm not dragging," said Swayne, "and I don't care to stag it, so I 'll stay at home and go to bed."

The shining bell buttons of the dress coats and the glistening white ducks were soon flashing through the company street as the eager "spoon-oids" hurried away to report their departure for the hop, and only a few upper classmen were left in camp when Swayne stepped inside and began making down his bed. The situation which he found upon return from furlough awakened his deepest interest and he was glad of the opportunity to be alone with Douglas for a confidential talk.

"Well," said he as he stretched out at full length upon the blanketed floor, "from all I can gather you have had a mighty disagreeable camp."

"Yes," said Douglas, "and I have had my share of the disagreeable. I have never favored certain varieties of hazing and when the campaign began against the practice I felt bound to coöperate. The more headquarters tried to repress hazing the more a certain element in my class tried to support it. As a consequence, camp has been the scene of constant arrests,

fight, cons and busts. I did all I could to hold down the fighting but the experience was worse than riding a bucking bronco. I've lost all hold and can't see where the thing is going to end.

"The popularity of my victory over Hardin," continued Douglas, "did n't last a minute when the plebes began to show some B.J.ety and the hotheads began to think that they traced the origin of this to me. I approved of one fight; the Tac. department found it out and gave me credit for instigating all the rest. Then the night I was busted some of the boys gave me a corps yell. I recognized some of the voices, but as I refused to discuss the matter when I was called upon by Captain Skinner I am also credited with responsibility for a small-sized mutiny."

"I see, I see," said Swayne attentively. "I would feel about as happy as a dog under the circumstances, but in the military profession a fellow must take his medicine and keep quiet."

"The thing is not over yet by any means," continued Douglas—"in fact the trouble has just begun. Your class will be drawn into these affairs in less than a week and I have been wondering how you would stand on the subject."

"I believe in the very strictest discipline for

plebes in ranks," said Swayne decisively, "and outside of ranks I believe in treating them as if they did not exist."

"Well," said Douglas, "it is reported that some men propose to break all precedent by carrying the hazing of the plebes into their life in barracks. Suppose it is tried in B company?"

"The man who tries it in my presence will suffer the consequence," said Swayne without an instant's hesitation. "But in camp——" Swayne hesitated. The two young men had blown out the lights and both were lying upon the tent-floor wrapped in their blankets. The sound of noisy laughter was coming to their ears from one of the near-by tents producing an indefinable sense of irritation. The noise also came gratingly to the ear of a stockily built cadet who was coming down the general parade. Taking advantage of the absence of upper classmen from camp, several plebes were indulging in some unprecedented liberties.

Bobby MacGregor came to a halt and then thrust back his cap. Leaping across the grass he flung up the rear tent flap and crouched at the pole.

"Well, plebelings," said he in tragic tones, "there used to be a time away back in the moth-eaten past when a plebe stood attention to an upper classman when such a dignitary deigned to set foot within his humble domicile, Sirrah!" And as Bobby stamped his foot upon the floor all jumped to attention.

"Ah, 't is well, 't is well. The traditions of the past have not been wholly annihilated by the frivolities of the present. Sit down, plebelings, sit down, and I will show you by the sad story of my life, how, when I was a plebe, it was customary to take advantage of an occasion like this to hand out the benefits of experience to those less fortunate.

"Well, sirs, one day as I sat in my tent patiently spoiling a waist-plate for the captain of the company, a dark-eyed, purply-faced yearling set foot upon my hearthstone. He bade me be seated and resume my patient toil, told me that he had been down to the Ansonia Brass Works having his face repaired and that the post surgeon, being more or less of a blacksmith, had him in the hospital tightening up some rivets that had recently come loose. He assured me that I

needed similar treatment. Steady, mister, steady, don't smile, sir," said Bobby, "this is a sad story as you will soon learn. To continue, sons of toil, I took the bait. The next morning I presented myself to the surgeon, accused my liver, and was admitted to the hospital on a complexion that would put the yellow ochre clean off the paint list any time I might want to go into business.

"The surgeon inspected the ward about 9:00 a. m. and I, with three other plebes, was left alone with the brass-faced yearling. 'Young gentlemen,' said he, 'do you hear the thunder of the light artillery upon the plain? Well, I regret that the unkind hand of Fate has placed you in the hospital while your more fortunate classmates are receiving the blessings of such excellent instruction, but I will volunteer to teach you.'

"Now, plebelings, your names," and Bobby folded his arms like a Roman patrician surveying his plebeian followers.

"Mr. Baker, sir."

"Mr. Hunter, sir."

"Mr. Nelson, sir."

"Ah, 't is well," said Bobby. "It was at this

stage that the brass-faced yearling said to me: 'Mister, you will be the 3.2 Breech Loading Rifle, so get down on all fours as becomes an efficient weapon.' Now Mr. Baker you will be permitted to impersonate me in this dignified rôle, so get into position. Mr. Hunter and Mr. Nelson leap to your places as cannoneers. Aha, 't is well.

"In Battery! March! Action R—r-rear!" sang Bobby in such perfect imitation of the light battery commander's voice and manner that the plebes shivered with suppressed laughter. "Lay hold of that piece promptly," he commanded in low, tragic tones. "Aha, now this rope around that leg—'t will do for the lanyard. There, there. Steady now. Aim! Batter-r-ry Fire!"

Mr. Hunter, fully appreciating the opportunity of a joke on a most unpopular member of his class, yanked back the cord so hard as to snap out both Mr. Baker's legs and let him down on the tent-floor with a thud.

"By hand to the front!" commanded Bobby, and both plebes seized Mr. Nelson by the arms and legs and ran him forward on all fours until he brought up against the tent-pole.

"Sponge out. Steady, sir, steady," cautioned

Bobby as the giggling plebe seized a bucket of water, "that will do. Load! Aim! Fir-r-r-e. Stand fast! Re-prime. Here, Mr. Hunter is a laundry spike¹—that will do for a priming rod.

"Steady, Mr. Baker, steady, sir," said Bobby reprovingly as the plebe uttered a little squeal when he felt the touch of the pin-point, "what are you fussing about, sir? Why, this thing happened a whole year ago and I was stuck with the pin, not you, sir.

"Well, stand up, that will do for the artillery, but the brass-faced yearling also favored me with some ideas on athletic training. Back to back, Mr. Baker and Mr. Nelson, arms above the heads, backs of hands touching. Now at the command 'down' see which can touch the floor first."

Anxious to square accounts with Mr. Nelson, whose zeal in the artillery drill had thoroughly displeased him, Mr. Baker shot 'down' with all his strength, driving Mr. Nelson straight forward through the half latched tent-flaps and out into the company streets, while Bobby Mac-

¹ "Laundry spike."—A large sized common pin used for fastening up bundles in the cadet laundry.

Gregor ducked beneath the rear of the tent and resumed his stroll.

Douglas and Swayne knew nothing of this piece of reckless hazing, for upon the suspension of the noise in the plebes' tent they had resumed their conversation on the methods of preventing the commission of such offense against discipline as their dear friend Bobby had just been committing. A long and earnest conversation between these two lads in which they mutually pledged support and coöperation was brought to a sudden halt by two sharp explosions in the vicinity of No. 5, followed by the call of the plebe sentinel for the corporal of the guard.

Douglas sprang to his feet and as the thoughts flashed through his mind of the first night on guard which had caused all his misfortunes, another series of explosions reverberated through camp and the plebe again called lustily for the corporal of the guard.

Standing in front of his tent, Douglas could see Captain Skinner, the officer in charge, rushing toward the scene of alarm with saber in hand, and when he disappeared behind the big tent within the limits of No. 5, a low whistle

sounded along the company streets. In an instant a number of gray-clad figures were flying silently in the direction of Captain Skinner's tent, and a moment later they were racing toward Fort Clinton with arms filled with Rory O'Connor's contraband. In the deep blackness of the shadows on No. 3 it was an easy matter to leap across the sentinel's post unobserved, and before Douglas could recover from his astonishment, the entire wagon-load which had arrived during parade was safely within the limits of Fort Clinton. Had he been able to penetrate the darkness he might have observed Rory O'Connor and Bobby MacGregor at the head of the raiding party, but fortunately the identity of all the individuals was lost in the hazy light about the captain's tent.

"Go it, Bobby, go it," urged Rory as they reached Fort Clinton, "they may sound the long roll and we have n't a second to spare."

"I 'll do my best for a good and holy cause," grunted Bobby as he stumbled along with his burden.

In a few seconds the group had reached the very spot near Kosciusko's monument where

Douglas and Rory crossed for the fight with Hardin, and once more Rory leaped over the parapet and stood in the road.

"Mike, Mike," he called softly, "this way, this way. Back up your cart, quick. That's it, good. Now, boys, over with the nefarious contraband and let it come as fast as you can throw it."

Down the side of the parapet came the boxes of candies, of peaches and pears, and apples, and in less time than it takes to record the incidents, all Rory's plunder was safely packed in the cart of Mike, the company policeman, and the latter was trotting away with his precious burden towards a pre-arranged rendezvous.

"Dandy work," panted Bobby as he mopped his brow. "Your cap is safe, too, Rory. Just before I cut for high timber I saw big Zeke Shanks crawling underneath the Com's tent-walls with the evidence of treason in his hands. Odd's blood, 't is well. This is the greatest coup d'état ever engineered by any goat since the days of Saville. Now scatter, boys, scatter, and don't talk about this joke until we have eaten the boodle."

No command was needed to urge the raiders

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to precipitate flight. If a single man were to be captured the fruits of the victory would be lost. Rory was running straight across the interior of Fort Clinton when his eye suddenly caught the glimmer of a light and he halted in his tracks. His heart stood still, but in a moment he saw that the glow was not from the bull's eye of a lantern, but rather from an object which had almost burned to the ash. A sudden impulse made him leap forward with chills racing down his spine and the goose quills standing all over his body. As the excited lad dashed straight at the flickering light, he saw someone leap up, spring frantically over the parapet and down into the ditch below.

A second later Rory stood panting over a half-burned bundle of straw wrapped in a white cloth. Snatching up the unburned fragment of the article, Rory sprang over the parapet and down into the ditch, but all was silent and not a soul could be seen in the darkness.

Rory had recovered his cap and re-captured his boodle, but the man who found it necessary to burn a bundle of straw on the last night of camp had escaped his hands.



***HE STOOD OVER A HALF-BURNED
BUNDLE OF STRAW***

CHAPTER XI

SWAYNE OFFENDS SAM SMOKE



WITH the half-burned cloth thrust beneath his blouse, Rory O'Connor leaped back across the sentinel's post and dashed around the corner of A company tents. Then he came down to a walk and cautiously approached Sam Smoke's tent.

No light shone within, though Sam was there and flinging his blankets about wildly in his haste to make down his bed, but Hardin was not in sight and all his effects seemed to be in their usual place. Rory pounded his hands together furiously at this wholly unexpected discovery, for he fully realized that the chance of fixing the identity of the straw burner had been lost by just the fraction of a second, so he turned slowly away and walked down the street.

A single candle was burning in a class-mate's tent near the end of the line and as Rory approached it he pulled the cloth from beneath his

blouse and held it up to the yellow glow. The light revealed to his eager gaze the remnants of a pillow case one side of which was stained to a dull yellow as if by long contact with the earth, but his excitement leaped to fever heat as he saw that the unburned portion of the hem still retained the last letter of a name and that letter was "l."

"Douglas Atwell's," exclaimed Rory vehemently. "He lost two the night Mr. Lumley was hazed on post: one of them Captain Barton picked up after the fracas was over, and here, by Jove, is the other."

Rory blew out the light as he heard the sound of an approaching foot-step and thrust the precious find beneath his blouse as he stepped out into the company street. There was deep chagrin in his failure to overtake the culprit and establish his guilt beyond the shadow of a doubt, but the pleasure of having recaptured his boodle and recovered his cap somewhat compensated for the disappointment he felt. The spectacle, moreover, of Captain Skinner slowly returning from the direction of No. 5 to his looted tent, drove all other thoughts from his mind for the moment.

Rory eagerly watched the angry tactical officer fling back the tent-flaps and step inside. Then he saw the captain light a candle and stand transfixed as he beheld through the open way to his sleeping apartment one solitary package left of all that load which the country expressman had turned over to him at parade.

Standing in the shadow of an adjacent tent, Rory was shaking with inward laughter when a sound greeted his ears from the sentinel on No. 3, "which almost froze the marrow of his bones," "Halt! Who 's there? Come to a halt, there! Halt! H-a-l-t!"

No answer came to the sentry's repeated challenge, but the furious patter of running feet indicated that some of the "raiders" were in great danger of discovery. As all the horrors of an investigation, exposure, and additional penalties flashed through Rory's mind, he heard the rattle of a saber and turned to see Captain Skinner running towards the sentinel's post. Almost at the same instant a thick-set figure plunged around the corner of a tent, bolted into Rory and rolled headlong with him to the ground.

"Why don't you look where you 're going, you

lunk-head of a plebe," growled the runner, and Rory at once recognized the voice of wee Bobby.

"It 's me, Bobby," gasped Rory apologetically, "are you hurt?"

"Odds blood, no. But get to your feet and run for your life. Captain Skinner is after us."

The clink of a saber started them both forward as if stung by an electric spark. Through the nearest tent they fled, over the lockers and into the next one. It was dark within but Rory was suddenly conscious of a writhing form beneath his feet and an awakened plebe sat up with a startled shout and clutched him by the leg.

"Unhand me, villain," chuckled Rory as he jerked the plebe half way through the tent-wall and scrambled on behind the flying Bobby. The latter had overturned the lights in the next tent and then suddenly swerved to the left. In two bounds he crossed the company street and shot through an array of dumb-bells, Indian clubs and shoes as he sprang underneath the rear tent-wall and emerged on the general parade.

"Into your tent, quick," said Bobby, and as Roderick plunged upon the floor between the astonished occupants, Swayne and Douglas,

Bobby came down to a walk and sauntered off to his tent whistling merrily as he went.

In a convulsive fit of laughter Roderick struggled to undress all over at once, but before he could untie a shoe-string he heard the voice of the officer of the guard as he ran from street to street, "Fall in the companies immediately and call the roll by order of the officer in charge."

In an instant Swayne was rushing up the company street ordering everyone into ranks and when Swayne spoke men jumped to obey. Within thirty seconds after the reception of the order the lines in B company were forming and Swayne was rattling off the names from memory with a rapidity and accuracy which made the head spin.

A great many were absent at the hop, some were sick in the hospital, and others were on guard, but Swayne had acquainted himself so perfectly with the whereabouts of every man in the company that he was certain of his report when he, as ranking cadet officer on duty with the company, reported to Captain Skinner, "Sir, all are present or accounted for."

Similar reports were received from all the

other companies, and within a minute every man in camp knew what had happened and that no one had been caught. "It 's as slick a piece of work as I 've observed during a long career of transgressions," said Bobby MacGregor thoughtfully, "I wonder who could have done it!"

From an admiring group of yearlings who listened to his words of innocent wonderment a laugh rose and swelled until it amounted almost to a cheer as they broke and turned to their respective tents with the laughing query "we al-l wonder who could have done it!"

Bobby, the soberest man in the company, had scarcely reached his tent when Swayne approached. "MacGregor," said he, "get your rifle and trimmings and fall in for sentinel duty. Captain Skinner has ordered a running guard to patrol the company street until reveille."

And the second laugh was louder than the first as Bobby demurely shouldered his rifle "and took charge of that post and all government property in view." A more exemplary bearing could not have been maintained by any other man in the corps of cadets than that which Bobby displayed as he came to rigid attention upon the

approach of Captain Skinner. His rifle came down to the "present" with fine precision and then he tossed it up to the "port" upon the captain's query, "What are your orders?"

"I have received no special orders as yet, sir," said Bobby, "but I presume that I am to prevent any transgressions of discipline—"

Rory O'Connor almost choked as he heard the words, but Captain Skinner at once interrupted Bobby's "presumptions" with a set of drastic orders which were well calculated to prevent that which had already occurred, and a more obedient and trustworthy sentinel never walked his post than "wee Bobby MacGregor, the goat of his class."

The guard was maintained throughout the entire night, and just as the beautiful dawn was breaking in the east, Douglas and Roderick were posted for the last period before reveille. As the first call pealed through the sleeping camp all the sentinels were relieved, and the last night for the corps of cadets had been past in the tented field.

Orders had already been issued for the breaking of camp, and upon return of the battalion from breakfast all assailed the work with be-

coming energy. Stretchers were hauled down from the ridge poles and stacked with the scanty possessions of the cadets, and soon across the plain the young soldiers trudged in pairs with the improvised litters between them. The heavier articles were carried in wagons but all equipment and breakable materials must be "dragged" by the individual cadet.

The work was hard, but no one assailed it with more zeal than Roderick O'Connor. The last days of camp had brought him back to fair fields and good prospects. He had not yet recovered that tell-tale cap but he knew that Zeke Shanks had it safely concealed, and this, the recovery of his boodle, together with the termination of his long punishment for breaking across a sentinel's post, permitted him to look into the future with keen anticipations of pleasure. He therefore jumped at his work with a zeal and enthusiasm which Douglas could but poorly imitate, for to the latter the coming half of the academic year meant the greatest struggle of his life. Though filled with grim forebodings for the future, he assailed his task with military promptness and by 9:30 a. m. all his effects had

been carried to the third floor of the fourth division and deposited in the room just below that which he and Rory had occupied during the preceding year, and at 10:00 o'clock all was ready for the formal abandonment of camp.

Arms were stacked in the company streets, and as three taps were sounded on the drum, the white tents which had sheltered the corps of cadets throughout one of the most turbulent camps in its history, went down together with a crash.

Tentage was rapidly folded according to regulations and piled in symmetrical heaps, and then to the touching strains of "Auld Lang Syne" and "The Girl I Left Behind Me," the battalion, under command of the commandant of cadets, swept out across the cavalry plain, and in solid column of platoons turned straight toward barracks.

"Battalion, Halt!" rang out the command as the platoons united in line: and rifles came down with excellent precision, and the corps once more stood in front of the gray turretted barracks wherein thousands had struggled manfully but in vain to meet the demands of a most rigid curriculum.

It was this thought which tortured Douglas. As Swayne's command "Dismissed!" swept down the line, the ranks broke, and by twos and threes the stalwart lads hastened through the sally-ports and turned to their rooms.

"Douglas, I 'm going to dead beat on you," said Rory as he placed his rifle in the gun-rack and hastily tossed off his equipment. "I 've got a little piece of important business to attend to over—outside I mean, and I 'm going to ask you to look out for my stuff while I am gone."

"Certainly," said Douglas eagerly. "Give yourself no worry about the room and come back when you get ready."

"Dandy chap, don't you know, very salt of the earth," mused Rory as he dashed downstairs and walked out on the parade. For the first time since that night in camp when he attempted to rush Douglas Atwell's line of sentinels, Rory was at liberty to walk beyond the limits of camp or quarters, but on this, the first day of his deliverance from con. he was not in quest of enjoyment but rather on serious business bent. He had given Douglas no reason for his request to be excused from the duty of arranging the room

and it was not in the latter's disposition to ask. Eager to do Rory a favor, he promptly assailed the task of arranging the heaps of trappings which littered up the room, while Rory paused for a moment beneath the great trees in front of barracks, and then turned directly back to camp where a detachment of army service men was already collecting the tentage and lockers and raising the tent-floors.

The work was nearly completed in A company when the eager lad arrived and hastened down the street to the point at which his pursuit of the straw-burner had terminated on the preceding evening. The floor was already up, and with rapidly beating heart Rory crouched over the spot it had covered. What did he see? Enough indeed to make his fists clench, his face flush scarlet and his chest heave as he backed away and turned his steps toward the entrance to Fort Clinton, where he was lost to view behind the great parapets of that century-old defense of the Highlands.

All these happenings were unknown to Douglas. He merely knew that Rory returned to barracks at five minutes before first call for dinner

in an unusual state of abstraction, to find his room neatly arranged and ready for occupancy.

"It 's mighty generous of you, old boy," said Rory in the gentle and affectionate manner so natural with him as he laid his hand on Douglas' shoullder and walked slowly downstairs for dinner formation. "Dug. we 're going to bone dis.¹ like fiends this year. We 're going to keep that room so neat that Captain Barton could n't skin us for it. We 'll never get a late—"

"Tat-ta-rat-tat-tat!" rolled the snare-drum at the north sally-port, and Douglas and Rory sprang down the remaining flight of stairs three steps at a time. Douglas was leading as they reached the hall door and in two leaps he arrived at his place in the rear rank, but Rory had to pass around the right flank, and with Swayne's steel blue eyes coldly measuring off his pace with the rattle of the drum, he raced for his vacant place. "Well, you know that story about good resolutions," he mused as he faced to the front just a fraction of a second behind the last tap of the drum. "I was Swayne's host last night,

¹ An abbreviation of discipline.

"To bone dis. like a fiend." — To be especially careful in matters of discipline.

loaned him my blanket and bruised my fair skin on the hard boards to make him comfortable, but all the favors in the world would n't bribe him to turn away his eyes if he thought it his duty to look straight to the front. He 's a dandy."

Thus it was that Rory marched away to dinner mentally complimenting the man who would not shrink from the duty of punishing him.

That afternoon the yearlings drew their books from the cadet store, and Douglas for the first time looked upon the awesome pile whose contents he must master before the coming January examinations. On the top of the heap lay C. Smith's Conic Sections and Solid Geometry, in the very name of which there was sufficient terror to drive the yearlings into nightmares. Beneath it lay Church's Descriptive Geometry with its Application to Shades, Shadows and Perspective—a very quicksand in which thousands of cadets had perished in the annual march toward the "promised land." Laying these aside with a shiver Douglas opened his box of drawing instruments, each piece of polished German silver resting snugly within its velvet lined depres-

sion, and over these he hung with loving fondness. In their keen points and delicate mechanism there was no unfriendly threat, for our young friend was a draughtsman to the manner born. As a child he had been the wonder of the country school which he attended, and as a soldier in the Philippines he had brought himself to the notice of his superior officers by an excellent sketch of the insurgent trenches taken from a tree-top almost within their lines, while throughout the succeeding campaign his maps and sketches were sought and appreciated by every officer with whom he served.

It was, therefore, with keen anticipations of pleasure that he looked forward to those afternoons in the drawing academy when he would be permitted to enjoy the fruits of his one brilliant talent. Douglas pressed each glistening instrument back into its place and turned to the other books in the pile.

There were Borel's *Grammaire Française*, Hennequin's *Lessons in Idiomatic French*, Bocher's *College Series of French Plays*, Vol. II, Edgren's *Compendious French Grammar*, with a number of others of the same class. These oc-

casioned no great anxiety, however, but the books on mathematics sent the chills creeping over him, for they recalled the bitter memories of his plebe struggle against almost certain disaster. How he had staggered through his final examination he never knew, yet every second classman would tell him that plebe math. was mere child's play compared to C. Smith's Conics.

"Well, I 'll die fighting," exclaimed Douglas half aloud as he seized his new book and tore it open at the first page. "There are two days yet before the first recitation, and I will not fail on account of lack of effort."

So saying he buried himself in the text and at ten minutes before the first call for parade Rory found him still at his work. The latter had been absent the entire afternoon and the intensely pre-occupied expression of his face indicated that he had been on no mission of mere pleasure.

"You 're taking an early start, Dug.," said he as he deposited his cap on the table, his dress-coat on a chair, and his collar on the mantelpiece. "Drop it now, and let us get ready for parade—you know we 've stopped getting late."

Douglas smiled as he noted the disorder cre-

ated in thirty seconds by Rory's entrance, but he closed the book with a bang and rose well satisfied. "I seem to have some glimmerings of light on this subject already," said he enthusiastically. "Not the real thing, you know, but about as close to the pure C. S. as summer lightning is to the genuine flash."

"I know you are going to max it this year," said Rory encouragingly, as he creased a new pair of white ducks and climbed into a chair so as to slide in without marring the "spooniness." "Lend a shoulder, Dug.—ah, that 's it. Now the other leg—steady, there, it 's done.

"I tell you, Dug., old boy, we 're going to make things hum in the academic line. I 'm after scalps like a mad Comanche. We 'll cut out spooning, don't you know, and work together whenever you can spare the time. I hope you won't mind, but it will help me to get right down to the level of your zeal if we work together and I thought we 'd better start right off on that plan."

Douglas flushed scarlet and turned away as a lump rose in his throat. Rory's proposition was merely a generously veiled assurance that

Douglas might count once more on the assistance of the fertile brain which had previously saved him from disaster.

"I need not tell you how grateful I will be for your help, Rory," said he, unwilling to accept the assumption of mental equality, and Rory's quick intuition told him that it was useless to further disguise his intentions with a man who could not be led to rate himself at a fictitious value.

The two friends dressed in silence and as the first call for parade rolled through barracks they stepped out upon the landing. Their room was located on the third floor of the fourth division overlooking the area of barracks. Immediately across the hall, Swayne shared his room with Bobby MacGregor—"asked me t' live wi' him," said the latter with a chuckle. "Ah, man, man, there 's no accountin' for tastes."

The surroundings would have been most agreeable had it not been for the fact that Sam Smoke and Bill Hardin had, for some unaccountable reason, chosen a plain room on the same floor. They had scarcely a friend in the company, yet they had secured a transfer upon breaking camp and had elected to live within speaking distance

of the man they regarded as their bitterest enemy. "There 's some reason for that maneuver, and we 'll discover the why sooner or later," said Rory thoughtfully as he descended to the second floor, where the first and second classmen were quartered. Here Cadet Captain Black had his room, while the top flight and the noisy ground floor were left for the plebes. Under this arrangement, the lower and upper subdivisions were under the direct supervision of Black and Swayne.

Neat as a fashion-plate, the tassels of his red silk sash dangling across the hilt of his sword, the latter was gliding downstairs as Rory and Douglas descended. "What a little brick he is," said Douglas as his eyes eagerly followed the man he admired more than any other in the corps. "I saw one in the Philippines who might have been Swayne's brother. You 've heard me speak of him, Rory. . . . Lieut. Milton, I mean, the young officer who led the charge of my company on block-house No. 14. I can see him yet as he leaped into the trenches and fought like a little tiger. He would shed his last drop of blood if he thought the most trifling duty demanded it, and so would Swayne. With such men as Smoke

and Hardin in ranks I am afraid that this spirit will get Swayne into trouble. If so, we will have to support him no matter what it costs."

Douglas glanced behind him as he spoke and saw Smoke's eyes following him with an angry, malicious stare which was suddenly turned to one of embarrassment and confusion as Douglas met his gaze with a fearless, challenging look.

They passed each other without a word and took their places in ranks. Smoke was in an ill temper and ready to visit his wrath on any one who could not pay him back in his own coin, and an unfortunate circumstance gave him his opportunity.

Ignorant of the fact that Smoke was to be assigned to B company, Mr. Hart had also transferred in order to live in barracks with one of his best friends; and to-night the absence of some plebes from parade threw him two places to his natural left and made him Smoke's rear rank file. It was the opportunity which Smoke desired and the excuse for action occurred when the assembly sounded and Mr. Hart hurried forward, stumbled, and bolted violently into the yearling's back.

Whirling about, Smoke almost backed the plebe out of the ranks as he poured forth such a torrent of reprimand and invective as is seldom visited upon a plebe for the most serious offense. The assembly was sounding, but either through stupid inattention or deliberate design, he ignored the military proprieties of the moment and continued to rate Mr. Hart in the most merciless manner.

"Come to attention on the right of the company," commanded Swayne sharply. "Come to attention, Smoke," he repeated explicitly, his voice rising like the angry tones of a bell over the low rattle of the drum, but as Smoke paid no heed Swayne sprang forward and tapped him sharply on the shoulder. "Come to attention instantly, sir," and as Smoke faced sullenly about Swayne stood in front of him his eyes flashing with indignation and anger.

The assembly had ceased and the ranks were still as death as Swayne's biting words rang out, "The next time I order you to come to attention, don't you fail to obey, do you understand?" And then Swayne walked back to his place and called his roll as if nothing had happened to excite his resentment.

Black had watched the affair without a word, but when he opened ranks and began his inspection of the company, he re-inforced Swayne's reprimand by sharply calling Smoke's attention to his imperfectly blackened shoes and unpolished waist-plate, and his manner left no doubt that he was ready to support Swayne by all the authority of his office.

It was an unusual thing indeed to rebuke a yearling so sternly, still more unusual to visit such a rebuke upon a corporal, but Smoke's breach of discipline was unusually flagrant and fully justified Swayne's method of reproof. This would be the calm official judgment of a disinterested party, but would it be the judgment of the yearling class?

"Close ranks, March!" came Black's command as he finished his inspection, and the ranks melted together and assumed the "rest." The company stood in silence; but nearly every yearling in ranks turned to a class-mate with a sullen questioning glance which would have augured badly for the relations of the third and second classes had any other man than Smoke been concerned. Fortunately for the peace of

the corps, Smoke had but few friends and one of them was Hardin, who now addressed him. "Well, are you going to stand for that sort of bull-dozing?"

Smoke's eyes were moist and his voice was husky as he replied. "It 's the sort of thing we might expect from a friend of Atwell, but I 'll square that account with both of them if it takes a lifetime."

"So? So?" crooned Bobby MacGregor as he turned and winked at Douglas. "Odd's blood. 'S death!"

The adjutant and sergeant-major walked out upon the parade-ground, the band struck up a dashing march, and at Black's command the company moved forward in cadence with the music and swung out upon the plain.

Once more the big battalion formed its perfect lines in front of the superintendent's quarters, and nothing in the appearance of the erect and silent figures of the color company would indicate the presence of the trouble which was brewing in its ranks.

Parade passed off in the usual flawless manner, and to the time-honored beat of the "um-dah,

um-dah," the companies moved forward in echelon at the double time, and broke into column as they headed for barracks. Ten minutes later they had replaced the glove-like dress-coat with its glittering bell buttons by the more comfortable and prosaic blouse and were once more in ranks en route to the mess-hall.

From the old walls generals whose fame had commanded the respect of a hemisphere were looking down from their portraits upon the youths who aspired to a seat among their mighty councils, but portraits and a nation's history had no place in the conversation which filled the hall with a mighty roar on the memorable August evening. It was repeatedly asserted that Swayne had assailed Smoke ostensibly for failing to come to attention at command, but really for using harsh and unwarranted language to a plebe . . . in other words that Swayne had seized upon the opportunity for the purpose of boning chevrons and getting a boot-lick on the com. and sup. in their campaign against hazing.

At every table except Swayne's the subject was discussed and hot opinions exchanged, and encouraged by his near friends, Smoke believed

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that the moment was ripe for punishing Swayne for his audacious act and at the same time, forcing Douglas to coöperate in the plan. Accordingly when ranks broke, he dashed up to the latter and halted him in the sally-port.

"Atwell," said he, "in behalf of a number of men who desire it, I wish you would call a meeting of the class to-night immediately after inspection."


"For what purpose?" asked Douglas tersely.

"To discuss the attitude of Swayne towards the yearling class. I can hunt up the fellows and get them together in ten minutes after release from quarters."

Douglas shook his head. "I oppose a meeting for any such purpose unless it is positively necessary. If you show me that half the class wants it, I will be glad to honor your request. If not, there will be no meeting.

CHAPTER XII

SAM "GETS SQUARE"

 DOUGLAS, the class is seething like a kettle of boiling oil. You 've stirred up a terrible muss by your refusal to call a class-meeting on Smoke's case.

Of course you are right, but such radical action gave some of our dear friends the chance for which they have been waiting for a long time."

Rory O'Connor stood in front of Douglas' table, his cap pushed back over a mass of dark, curly hair, and his eyes sparkling with excitement. He had spent the evening visiting in barracks, for no study is required until the thirtieth of August and Rory had never found it necessary to work more than the prescribed period. He had therefore left Douglas zealously plodding away at his books while he went down to have a

jovial hour with Karl Krumms and other good friends. Here he heard of the campaign Sam Smoke was conducting and immediately went out "to camp on the old Apache's trail."

"Smoke had been canvassing from room to room," explained Rory as his handsome face flushed eagerly, "so Karl and I threw ourselves across his line of march and arrived in Dalton's room just before Sam and big Bill Hardin came in. It was quite a surprise to find us entrenched, but Sam apparently had met with such success up to that time that he resolved to proceed with the attack.

"'Dalton,' said he, 'I suppose you know that Swayne and I had some trouble the other night at parade, and that the class, almost to a man, resents his behavior. If you don't know it already I will say that I saw Atwell immediately after return from supper and asked him to call a class-meeting to discuss the case, and that Atwell refused point blank to do so unless I could show that one half of the class desired a meeting for this purpose. It's very embarrassing to be forced to fight out my case in this manner, but I've got to do it, so may I ask your opinion:

should a meeting of the class be called in my case or not?"

"Well," continued Rory, "little Dalton came to the scratch like a bantam. 'Yes, it is very embarrassing I should imagine,' said he in that dry, suggestive, little way he has, and old Sam looked as happy as a dog in a wet blanket.

"'What did you want to accomplish by this meeting, Smoke?' said Dalton, and Sam began guessing and sparring for time.

"'I—I just wanted to find out what the class thought about—about it. It is n't customary to let upper classmen bulldoze us in that style without getting themselves into trouble.'

"'You think Swayne insulted you and that he ought to be called out for it?' asked Dalton.

"'Yes, that 's about the case,' said Sam cautiously.

"'Well,' said Dalton, 'why don't you call him out then?'

"'Why, I am too big for him,' said Samuel magnanimously, and I nearly ruptured every cartilage in my body trying to restrain my laughter, but little Dalton never cracked a smile.

"'Swayne's about as big as Atwell,' said he in

that nasty little way again as he cast a suggestive glance at big Bill Hardin. 'I don't think it would be cruel or inhuman to let him try you out. But, by the way, don't you think that your resentment to Swayne is partly due to his friendship for Atwell?'

"'Never,' exclaimed Sam savagely, 'I—I—'

"'Oh, very well,' said the little bantam carelessly. 'I merely thought I overheard your remark to the effect that you would expect nothing else from a friend of Atwell, and that you would get square on both if it took a lifetime. I also thought I heard Black address some uncomplimentary remarks to you and if Swayne deserves a thrashing, so does Black. At any rate I'm a friend of Atwell's and I endorse everything he does without question. My decision is against you. If you can personally afford to ignore Swayne's conduct, so can the class.'

"'Well, old Sam was boiling and Dalton was as cool as a cucumber,'" continued Rory enthusiastically. "That boy is an actor to the manner born, Dug., and right there I cast him for a place in the next Hundredth Night Entertainment. But that's neither here nor there—it's getting close

to taps, so put away your books, old boy, and while you get ready for bed, I 'll tell you the rest of the story."

Douglas closed his books, stepped into his alcove, rolled down the mattress on his little iron bunk, and began his preparations for retiring. Indeed, this was no elaborate affair, for two iron bunks, two straight-backed wooden chairs, one plain wooden table, a clothes-press, and a small looking-glass on the iron mantelpiece constituted the complete furnishings of this Spartan abode. There was not a picture on the wall, not a rug or carpet on the floor, not a thing in the room to detract from the sturdy environment, the stoic simplicity of life at the Military Academy.

Along the eight-foot alcove wall that separated the sleeping apartments, Douglas hung his uniform, each article going upon its appointed hook, for at West Point there is a fixed place for everything and everything must be in its place. In this simple manner, Grant and Lee and all the great soldiers of the Republic had entered upon the life which prepared them for the most gigantic struggle in history, and to-night we find

our two young friends repeating the exact routine which had been followed by their distinguished predecessors and observed by a half century of cadets.

It was 9:45 p. m. and the measured tread of the third relief going off post could be heard on the porch of barracks when Rory tossed his pillow into place, thrust his feet into a pair of slippers and pulled on a dressing-gown.

"Jump into bed, Dug.," said he as he walked to the open window, "I 'll watch the tower clock and put out the light before taps. Well, to resume my story . . . Karl and I walked back over Sam's trail. We found that it will take us a month to straighten out all the tangles that Sam produced in a single hour. You see the thing looks like another case of 'sanctified plebe.' Every one knows how you prevented the fight in camp between Smoke and Mr. Hart, and a number who opposed you then are glad of the opportunity now of seeing unjust discrimination against a classmate in favor of the same plebe. When Swayne's public insult is added to Smoke's first injury, a prejudiced mind can easily make out a pretty strong case against the president of the

yearling class who declines even to permit the matter to come to a discussion."

"I see," said Douglas, "the thing has a nasty look."

"Had any other man than Smoke been concerned," continued Rory, "the whole yearling class would have been up in arms, but the big question mark you put on Smoke's veracity in Mr. Hart's case makes every one hesitate. As matters stand, old Smoke would have received small sympathy had not the news leaked out that some of the second classmen are holding a meeting to-night, and the idea got around that they propose making it hot for Smoke. I know this is not true, however. They are really discussing the plebe question, and Swayne is urging them to adopt a resolution against the forms of hazing used in the last encampment. I happen to know this because I met Swayne just before I came upstairs and he asked me if I thought you would approve such a resolution and if you could bring the yearling class to indorse it."

"Good for Swayne," said Douglas delightedly. "I felt sure he would take the leadership in this matter, but getting the yearling class to indorse

his ideas is like leading a bull calf through a narrow barn door. Of course I 'll do my best, but if the yearlings really take up the fight for Smoke and the second class indorses Swayne, there will be war in earnest, and any man who supports the second class against a class-mate will be regarded as a traitor."

"That 's about the situation, Dug.," said Rory soberly. "I think I poured some oil on the troubled waters, but perhaps I ought to tell you that there is a mighty ugly undercurrent against you. There was some talk of holding a special meeting in defiance of your wishes and either forcing you to resign or electing a separate president to represent the wishes of the 'down-trodden minority.' You know how nearly the class came to a split on Mr. Hart's case. Well, it is just as near a split again and the forces are just about as evenly divided. You won over the opposition the last time by casting your own vote, but that is impossible now. Be careful, Dug.," concluded Rory with intense earnestness. "To be deposed by the class would be a terrible embarrassment, a misfortune you would never cease to regret. Don't make a needless sacrifice

to impossible standards of duty; besides, I think I can stop Smoke's career in a minute if it becomes necessary—to ex . . . ”

“I ’ll take the risk . . . if you say so.”

Rory had advanced to the table and stood with one hand on the gas-jet, his fine face glowing with the excitement of his incompleted suggestion. For one minute he remained undecided. Then as a loud tap sounded on the drum in the area of barracks, he whirled about, extinguished the light, flung off his dressing-gown and jumped into bed. With the third tap of the drum, the long line of barracks which a second before had blazed with lights, stood bleak and dark, and the subdivision inspectors were running from room to room with their bull's eye lanterns.

“All in, sir,” said Douglas, as Swayne's light flashed over the bed, and then he lay still and listened as one in a dream to the sound of Swayne's retreating foot-steps as the latter dashed downstairs and across the area of barracks. Douglas held his breath so that he might hear Swayne's report to the officer in charge and then follow his foot-steps back to his room and as he listened the lad's heart went out to the

gallant little first sergeant whose principles he so heartily approved.

"Why should I not support him in danger," he mused as his muscles tightened and he clasped his hands behind his head and tried to think the situation over.

Rory had suspended the conversation and showed no disposition to renew it. He had given Douglas a hint and it was the latter's place to act if he saw fit, but Douglas was silent, and in a few moments Rory's heavy, measured breathing showed that he had dropped off to sleep.

A single stroke from the tower clock indicated that a half hour had passed since taps when Douglas crept softly out of bed, pulled on his dressing-gown, and walked over to the window. The upper sash was down and the soft August breeze swept in upon his face. Alone and close to nature, he could free himself from all selfish motives and decide strictly on the merits of the case. One night in the preceding June, he had stood in the same relative position in the room above, looked out upon the heavens with their pale stars, and yearned for peace and rest as a

lost child yearns for home. But peace and rest were not part of his lot. That night he discovered a man entering the academic building, and that discovery revealed a plot by two of his class-mates, Jackson and Storms, to disgrace him and drive him from the academy. The attempt had failed, and the next morning Jackson and Storms were missing from the ranks, never to return. But Storms was a bosom friend of both Hardin and Smoke, and the conviction was growing in Douglas' mind that their hatred for him was partly due to the suspicion that he had forced Storms to desert. Such was the case, and Douglas had no regrets for his part in the affair, nor would he shrink now from his responsibilities as president of the yearling class.

Rory O'Connor had suggested a means of arresting the progress of Sam Smoke, but Douglas clearly saw from Rory's manner that he had not conclusively compromised Sam and that any action would be taken at the generous fellow's peril. "And to save me," he mused, as he gazed affectionately at the sleeping figure of his room-mate. "How often has Rory saved me! How many weary hours has he spent driving into my head

the little knowledge of math. which finally staved off disaster!"

Yes, Rory had been as loyal as a mother, but in addition to this, Swayne's welfare was concerned, and for the little second classman Douglas entertained an affection similar to that which has its origin in the comradeship of the trench on a blood-stained battle-field.

And Smoke was trying to rouse the class against Swayne, trying to get a man turned out to whip him for having the courage to execute a manifest duty. "But you 'll never do it," said Douglas half aloud as he unconsciously turned with clenched fists toward Smoke's room. "No, you 'll never do it, not if I have to fight the whole class myself, and Rory will not risk himself in the slightest either."

Douglas flung off his dressing-gown and stepped back into bed. His resolution was taken. The course was as well defined as a problem in mathematics. There would be no yielding; the class might yield, but he would not. If Sam Smoke courted disaster he might suffer disaster. What would be a few pains, a few bruises, to the gratification of having crushed an unworthy

cause. Douglas almost laughed at the thought of hesitation, and having arrived at his conclusion, he closed his eyes contentedly and went to sleep.

The next day it was apparent from the attitude of the class that Sam was making progress, and the expected happened on the afternoon of that day when Sam himself appeared with a list of more than one half of the yearlings who said that they would like a meeting to discuss Swayne's conduct. Accordingly, when the big battalion swung into line after return from supper, Townsend stood in the dusk beneath the trees and included among his usual list of announcements:—"Mr. Atwell requests a meeting of the yearling class in his room, third floor, fourth division, immediately after breaking ranks." And then the air seemed to grow a trifle chiller and a little stiller with the next announcement: "Mr. Swayne requests a meeting of the second class, same floor, same division, same time. Mr. Swayne's room is opposite Mr. Atwell's."

Nearly every man in the battalion had heard of the affair with Smoke, and therefore the simultaneous meeting of both classes seemed to portend a class feud of no small magnitude.

Side by side the stalwart fellows trooped upstairs and within two minutes after breaking ranks Douglas mounted a chair and called the meeting to order.

"Gentlemen," said he, "we are here at the request of Mr. Smoke and about one half the other members of the class. As the affair concerns him more than any one else, I suggest that he explain to the class the reasons for this meeting."

Smoke was taken completely by surprise. It had been arranged that Hardin should get the floor and do the talking, but now the responsibility was thrown straight at Sam's head and he could not dodge the issue.

Sam stumbled to a chair, and the smile of Rory O'Connor's face spread wider and wider as he heard the offended yearling mutilating his case. With every sentence that he uttered, Sam lost standing with the class, and when he finished Douglas only waited the opportunity to complete the wreck of his case.

Sam had scarcely finished his garbled and inconsequential narrative, when Hardin secured the floor. His angry denunciation came too

late, however, to retrieve the errors of Sam's gross exaggerations, and Douglas again arose with full confidence that he had Smoke beaten.

"Gentlemen," said he, "you have heard the reasons for this meeting. You have also heard that I declined to call the meeting until at least one half the members of the class should indicate approval of that course. I did so because a meeting would savor of class action and might needlessly result in a fight. One fight may begin a series with all kinds of deplorable results. Class pride would be called into play and men who have been friends for years might be forced to beat each other like madmen to support a principle of which they did not approve. I wanted to avoid this. I do not think that Swayne had any personal motive in rebuking Smoke. His language was sharp, but his language is always sharp in ranks. He would rebuke any one in the same manner if he thought it necessary. Personally I would like to see the matter dropped, but if I felt as deeply aggrieved as Smoke professes to feel, I would ask no class meeting, but rather step across the hall and tell Swayne that

I demanded an apology or that a man be turned out to settle the case."

Dalton flung up his hands with a cheer, "Good boy, good boy," he shouted. "That 's the way to settle this thing. If Smoke wants to fight let him do the fighting. If Swayne is too small for him let the second class turn out a man of his size."

Sam stood like a stalled ox. He had thought of only one side of the case—that as Swayne was smaller than he, the yearlings, as a matter of class pride, would turn out some one else to whip Swayne. Douglas had mentally analyzed his mind to a nicety and the opposition that had been so carefully built up now vanished like magic before this pre-eminently square deal proposition, and unconsciously the class parted making room for Smoke to move to the door.

"Go on," commanded Hardin savagely. "Go in and challenge him."

Sam moved through his class-mates like one walking in his sleep, crossed the hall, and flung open the door.

Swayne paused in the midst of an animated discussion, not on the trivial matter of Sam

Smoke's wrongs, but on the resolution which he had asked his class-mates to adopt with a view to abolishing certain forms of hazing. He looked the very personification of neatness and military precision as he turned toward the intruder and sharply demanded: "Well, what is it, Smoke?"

"You insulted me at formation for parade the other night," blurted Sam, "and I demand an apology or a fight."

Swayne's fearless gaze seemed to rivet Sam to the spot as for one terrible minute he stood in silent indignation. Then he stepped coolly down from his chair and walked straight up to Sam.

"Raise your hands," he commanded.

The astonished yearling had scarcely obeyed when he was knocked reeling against the wall. In desperation he struck out might and main, but Swayne was underneath his flying arms and hitting like a battering ram. Back through the open door Sam was driven like a great big Brah-mah before the furious assault of a bantam. A half dozen yearlings had gathered on the landing and now stood in utter astonishment as Smoke was knocked about from side to side of the hall,

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retreating, almost running to escape. He had reached the head of the stairs when Swayne sprang aside and shot in one lightning blow which pitched Sam sideways against the edge of the bannister. Over he rolled, catching the railing as he went, sliding half-way down the stairs, his heels thrashing furiously on the iron stair steps.

Swayne gazed after him for one second and then turned, and as if utterly unconscious of any one's presence in the hall, walked back into his room and closed the door.

"I think that incident is about closed," said Douglas quietly. "Sam has gotten square at last. The class is dismissed."

CHAPTER XIII

DOUGLAS FAILS IN MATH. AND FINDS A CIT. IN BARRACKS



T was eight minutes to eight o'clock on the morning of September first. Through the area of barracks the clarion-voiced bugle was peeling forth its first call of the academic year, and one half of the corps of cadets was preparing to obey its summons.

To some, the call came as a mere incident in the routine of a successful career; to others, it came as a command to move forward on a hostile trench, a call to action in which some must surely perish.

Douglas Atwell glanced about his cleanly swept room to see that all was in perfect order, and then took up his descriptive geometry and

walked slowly downstairs. He was weary with three days' unremitting study and almost sick with anxiety, but no outward sign betrayed his emotions. One year of disaster, disappointments, and humiliations as a plebe in the academic departments, had taught him how to suffer defeat with unwavering fortitude, and never in all his arduous life was he more resolved to struggle for success than now.

The classes were already assembling when Douglas reached the area of barracks and walked out upon the asphalt walk where so many had formed for their last skirmish with the academic departments. He had no difficulty in knowing where to go for he was the goat of the class in "math." and sections form line according to merit.

The plebes too were gathering on the stone walk in front of the porch of barracks, prepared for their first mental ordeal, and Douglas thought of the day he stood in their place and inwardly shrank from the task they now had to face. Of the seven goats who had formed line with him after the first general transfer, he alone remained. The rest of the section had been swept away by

the June examination leaving him "clinging by his eyebrows." And where would the next stroke of the scythe strike? Douglas shuddered. He would rather die than fail, yet if the experience of the past was any index to the future, failure was now staring him in the face.

"I must escape from the goats or my fate is sealed," he mused half aloud as he gazed abstractedly at his open book. "I've got to scalp some one in the section above, and—well, whom?"

He raised his eyes and gazed along the half formed line. Big Bill Hardin was just stepping out in front of the adjacent section, and for once in his life Bill's sudden appearance on his horizon gave the lad a thrill of pleasure. Sam Smoke was a member of the third section from the bottom and therefore in no immediate danger, but Bill was a possible victim whose record from January to plebe June had shown evidence of steady mental decline. Opposites in every thought and creed, opponents in every principle, Hardin and Douglas were once more pitted against each other in the struggle for class rank and the success of one would probably mean the

ruin of the other. No new developments had occurred since the night of Smoke's humiliating defeat by Swayne, but the result of the class-meeting had merely intensified the desire of Smoke and his friends to "get square."

There was no time for personalities now, for the tower clock began tolling the hour of eight, the assembly sounded, the classes fell into silent, clear-cut lines with small intervals between the sections, and the section-marchers began calling their rolls.

"Report!" commanded the officer of the day, and from flank to flank the section-marchers reported in turn, "All are present, sir."

Then the sections faced to the left, and once more Douglas Atwell moved forward to do his best and abide the result. On the second floor of the academic building the section halted, hung caps in order along the wall, filed into the room and stood at attention, each man beside his desk while the section-marcher made his report.

"Take your seats," said Lieut. Grey, the instructor, "and mark down the lesson for tomorrow."

"Are there any questions?" he asked, but as

there was no immediate response, he quickly added, "Take these subjects from left to right at the front boards:—Mr. Wharton, Mr. O'Mara, Mr. Jones, Mr. Atwell, and Mr. Finch. I will question the other men."

Douglas felt a tingling sensation of pleasure sweep over him as he received his subject. He had spent more than ten hours on the lesson, three hours of which he had spent on this very problem and he felt that he could repeat the text verbatim. For the first time in his career as a cadet, a mathematical subject seemed to have a real significance, and yet this was the terrible "descript." which had probably claimed more victims than all other subjects combined.

"The thing has two ends and no middle," Bobby MacGregor had explained with the air of a veteran. "Either you see it or you don't see it, and between the two there is no salvation." And Douglas felt that he could see. He had the natural instinct of the draughtsman, and the analysis of vertical and horizontal projections was merely a scientific explanation of data he had already grasped in crude form. In fifteen minutes he had completed a neat and accurate figure

and had taken his seat. The two members of the section who had not been sent to front boards were still standing before the instructor's desk subjected to a searching fire of questions. They must bear the agony for five minutes longer, and it was real agony indeed. Many times Douglas had suffered it, but for once he knew the joy of mastering a subject instead of being mastered by it.

A glance about the section-room however, showed that only one other of that fated seven had a chance of escaping in the next annual slaughter of the goats. Napoleon Bonaparte O'Mara seemed contemplating the first stages of his Waterloo. Benjamin Franklin Jones was staring blankly at a bare board, uninspired by the distinguished name he bore, while J. Wheaton Wharton seemed trying to stand on his head in the effort "to see a thing after it was revolved upside down and faced about." Only little "Josephine" Finch who had barely escaped the scythe in June, seemed to understand the subject and was putting down a good demonstration.

"I will hear you, Mr. Atwell," said the instructor as he sent Swift and Smart whom he had questioned, to the board to solve some problems.

Douglas stepped to the board, took his pointer, announced his subject and at once proceeded to his demonstration. There was no hesitation, no uncertainty in his manner now. He was as sure of himself as when he shouldered his rifle and took his place in ranks for drill, and there none excelled him. It was glorious to look the instructor squarely in the face without the fear of an ominous head-shake and an expression of disapproval.

Douglas finished his recitation without an interruption while the section listened in wonder. "By Jove, he 's maxing it cold and frigid," mused Nappy O'Mara. "Did you ever? The old goat in the plebe math. is ragging out like a star."

The instructor asked a few questions and then with a look of utter incredulity upon his face, remarked, "Well, that 's right, sir. Your demonstration is correct—that will do."

Douglas felt as if he were walking on air as he turned away from the board, but the stern discipline of the West Point section-room prohibits the slightest indication of either elation or disappointment.

A few moments later, Napoleon Bonaparte

O'Mara retreated in disorder before a storm of questions to which he could make no reply, but on the faces of the goats was the same old look of quiet resignation—and perhaps no other experience of their lives was better calculated to train them for meeting the adversities of the battle-field with dignity and composure.

Thus opened the first day of the academic year, but the mill was already grinding with even speed and when the allotted hour and one half had terminated all seven goats had delivered up all they knew—as had every other man in the class, under the long established principle, “every man, every day, in every subject he is studying.”

Before the tramp of the retiring section had ceased resounding along the exit hall of the building, the other half of the class was marching in by the northern entrance, and the machine was moving on unimpeded.

During the momentary interim, however, Lieut. Grey had entered in his official record of the work of the goat section the following marks:—Atwell, 2.9; O'Mara, N. B., .5; Wharton, 1.7; Finch 2.5; Jones, B. F., 1.3. In this system, 3

represents a perfect recitation, while 2 is regarded as proficient. Any cadet who fails to attain the latter average, is considered deficient and is generally ordered out at the end of the term for a written examination in which failure involves discharge from the Military Academy.

In his first recitation, Douglas had scored like a first-section-man and his heart was full of hope as he bounded upstairs to his room. Rory was absent at his recitation and Douglas was alone to resume his work. He had one and one half hours to put on his lesson in French for his hour of instruction ran from eleven to twelve, while Rory was scheduled for the period from twelve to one. The lad worked hard and faithfully, but it was difficult to overcome the disadvantages of a country-bred tongue and in the language of O'Mara, "an Egyptian mummy would have been forced to laugh at the buxom manner in which he handled this delicate theme."

"I will not forget that I am a goat," he mused despondently as he took his seat after a lame and halting recitation for which he had received a generous 2.1. This was proficient, an average which would stave off disaster, but Douglas

yearned for the power to excel, and no effort was too great to attain his goal. Thus far, however, the day had been successful and he returned to his room full of zeal for the next task.

"I will put the remaining hour before dinner upon my analytical geometry," he said and at once seized the black-covered book with its awe-inspiring equations and figures. The drums were sounding the first call for dinner formation when Rory O'Connor dashed upstairs upon completion of his recitation in French and found Douglas still hard at his work, his brows knit and his hair twisted in the clutch of his nervous fingers.

"How did you get on?" asked Rory anxiously.

"Fine in 'descript.' fair in French, but in 'analyt.' it's the same old story. I've worked like a slave for an hour and have n't made a bit of progress."

"You'll get it finally, Dug.," said Rory encouragingly. "A man with your zeal can't possibly fail."

The two friends rapidly dressed for dinner and a few minutes later the battalion was marching into the mess-hall. The big room fairly roared

with the noise of conversation, for every class had had its first experience in a new field and reputations had been made and lost. In twenty-five minutes of furious eating and talking the humorous experiences of the morning's work had been discussed and the corps waited the command to rise.

"How did they do in your section, Carter?" asked Douglas tentatively as he turned to the aforesaid member of the "NthI" section.

"Fessed out cold, every man of us," said Carter carelessly, "but your old friend Bill Hardin was the worst of the bunch. Bill was as funny as a bear on a greased pole and just about as graceful. When he started in on his subject he looked like a man who had arrived at the north pole and found an order waiting for him to proceed to the north. Bill tried to climb the pole with aforesaid graceful effect. The instructor probably gave him .5 to pay for the show."

"I notice that you feel heart-broken over Bill's failure," added Carter suggestively and Douglas blushed like a school-girl under the implied accusation. His embarrassment was relieved, however, by Townsend's command "B and C

companies, Rise!" and at 1:40 p. m. the battalion halted in front of barracks, broke ranks, and rushed headlong through the north sally-port. Not a moment could be lost, for work was to be resumed at 2:00 p. m. and advantage must be taken of the precious twenty minutes to put the final touches on the subjects for recitation. For the yearling class, however, the rest of the day was to be devoted to drawing, and with new instrument boxes tucked beneath their arms they formed at the aforesaid hour and marched away to the drawing academy.

All around the landing and on the high walls of this room hung the work of former cadets whose artistic ability or military reputation had since made them famous. There stood the work of the distinguished artist, Whistler, of Sherman, Grant, Meade and a dozen others whose names are associated with the greatest deeds of the western hemisphere. Here indeed was a little hall of fame.

"Is it possible that my work may some day stand side by side with these?" mused Douglas, and he flushed and chilled in rapid succession at the thought. And then his eyes caught the



***"THAT IS VERY GOOD WORK,
MR. ATWELL"***

flutter of an American flag sweeping gently across the canvas of a thrilling war scene. About a gate a dozen soldiers battled with bayonets like demons incarnate while a field piece was being forced forward by the furious lashings of a wounded driver to join the savage conflict. Here was an answer to his mental query. A seat among the councils of the mighty was always waiting for him who could triumph in such scenes as these in defense of a righteous cause.

The voice of Professor Larned startled the lad so deep was he in his dream and he reluctantly came to attention while the professor explained the character of the work required for the day and then started the yearlings on their long year's course. To Douglas the task set before him was no form of labor at all but rather a genuine pleasure, an interesting relaxation from the frenzied struggle with abstract mathematics. At last he had found a subject that was easy.

"That is very good work, Mr. Atwell," said one of the instructors as he passed the lad's desk, and Douglas realized that he had been complimented for the first time in his academic career.

Two delightful hours had passed when the re-

call sounded and a few moments later the area was swarming with cadets. All day long a military stillness had prevailed, broken only by the peal of the bugle or the cadenced tread of marching sections, but now it was release from quarters and the gray old buildings rang with the calls of friend to friend, and the joyous chatter of exuberant youth.

The long mental strain from 8:00 a. m. to 4:00 p. m. was over, but even the hours for recreation are occupied at old West Point. Fifteen minutes after the completion of the last recitation in the academic building, the battalion was in ranks for infantry drill. No time for frivolity, no time even for pure recreation; the U. S. Military Academy supplies the necessary stimulus to tired nerves by two hours of strenuous work. A sturdy, well-balanced mind in a sturdy, well-poised body is the object of the West Point training, and this is accomplished by demanding the maximum output of both body and mind.

It was time for the physical now, so with head erect, eyes straight to the front, our young friend was marching in the ranks, one of the trimmest, finest-looking soldiers of the corps.

The drill was over at 5:15 p. m. and the eager lads dashed back to their rooms—to rest? Yes, if a cadet rests by a change in the form of labor. Immediately the long barracks was a scene of intense activity as the battalion prepared for parade, and a half hour later, arrayed in white ducks, dress coats with glistening bell buttons, crossed belts and rifles, the companies were once more gliding across the plain to the music of the band. The tall plumes of the cadet officers trembled in the breeze, the swords flashed in the air, the tassels of their red silk sashes swept across the sword scabbards as the lines wove in and out and finally halted in place with faces toward the setting sun.

So smooth and snug are the glove-fitting dress coats that one could scarcely imagine a rapid motion in that peerless costume, but as the parade was finished the clamor of the double-time music was heard and the companies looked like single pieces of machinery as they double-timed to barracks.

Rest at last? No, the ending of one programme is the beginning of the next. Douglas Atwell had already spent seven hours of this day

in study or recitation, but ten minutes after the return of the battalion from supper he was at his table and eagerly assailing the tasks for the next day. The sections in mathematics were to alternate, reciting one day in analytical geometry, the next in descriptive, and Douglas was now at work on the former subject. And not until taps sounded in the area of barracks did he turn out his light and leap into bed, even then he retired in despair, his subject unmastered, his mind exhausted. There was just one hope—Bill Hardin might find the subject of analytical geometry as baffling as Douglas had found it himself.

The next day, he fully justified the judgment of the instructor who made him goat of the plebe class in "math." in the preceding June.

"Yesterday," said Nappy O'Mara, "we thought you had shed the honored horns and whiskers, but to-day we are gratified to know that you still browse with the herd."

So the days passed, days of unremitting labor and nights of horrible dreams, and Saturday came. Immediately after dinner, the battalion marched out to its old inspection ground with the column facing the northern portals of the High-

lands of the Hudson. The violet-tinted hills never looked more alluring, the blue river never more enchanting, but Douglas saw nothing of these, though his eyes looked straight at the lovely scene. In front of his mind's eye stood out the weekly report of Lieut. Grey, and upon it he struggled to reconstruct the record of his work. Here would be written the first chapter of the story in which he must survive or perish.

When the ranks broke, Douglas rushed to his room, and then fairly raced to the hall of the academic building where the marks were posted.

His heart stood still as he read the record:—
Atwell.—2.9, .5, 2.8, 1.5. He was nearly perfect in descriptive geometry, a hopeless failure in “analyt.”—and deficient for the week. His total was 7.5 while 8 was needed out of the possible 12 to make him safe.

Involuntarily his eyes ran up to the record of the section above and all else was lost to view but the one line which stood out before his eager gaze: Hardin.—.8, 1.5, 2.0, 1.0.—Total, 5.3.

“Great Jehoshaphat! I ’ve beaten him 2.2.”

Bill entered as Douglas stood gazing at the

mark, cast one glance at the record of his disastrous week, and withdrew with a scowl.

"Looks as if some one had bitten his dog," said Rory over Douglas' shoulder as he affectionately pressed his room-mate's arm. "Been sort of hoping that you might get that scalp, and if you can keep up that lick in 'descript.' you will surely have old Bill's top-piece dangling at your belt. It will be gall and wormwood for Bill to surrender to you, but the man who declares war must be prepared for all the humiliations of defeat."

Douglas and Rory had withdrawn to the outside of the circle of yearlings who surged about the glass case on the wall and anxiously scanned their marks.

"Did you see Atwell's mark?" said O'Mara as he pulled out of the circle. "Why he ranks the goats by more than a unit. Yes, he 's deficient," he added, "but so are more than twenty others, and he has every man beaten in the next section above except one."

Douglas smiled as he heard this conversation. In his eagerness concerning Hardin's work he had failed to note the marks of other men, so that O'Mara's remarks had the effect of dispel-

ling all anxiety concerning his own small deficiency and of assuring him of ultimate success. It was glorious to realize it. A transfer from the goats meant more to him than mere escape from danger; it meant that he might play once more on the Academy foot-ball team, might hear once more the applause of the exulting thousands as he carried the West Point colors to victory against the old-time enemy,—Annapolis.

The lad's blood rushed faster at the thought and he turned suddenly to Rory with sparkling eye. "Come on, Rory, old boy. I'm going to apply to Haverill for a foot-ball suit. We turn out for light practice at 3:00 p. m."

It was a glorious afternoon, with just enough sweep of the northwest wind across the plain to make the young athlete yearn for action.

"There will be no line-up," said Haverill, the captain of the team. "Take charge of that batch of plebes and subs., Atwell, and train them in falling on the ball. Swayne and O'Connor look after the punts and catches."

Douglas turned promptly to the designated "batch" and was astonished to find Hardin and Smoke among his pupils. They had both ap-

peared on the gridiron the year before, but neither had won a place on the team. There was fame, however, awaiting the successful player, fame for which Sam Smoke yearned, and he and his boon companion were out once more "to beat Atwell and O'Connor" in the struggle for a place.

Pursuant to Haverill's instructions, Douglas set to work at once upon his squad, sending Smoke and Hardin and all the rest tumbling after the ball, and correcting every error with the utmost impartiality. It was a difficult position for the lad to assume, but every one concerned could appreciate the justice of his remarks except Hardin and Smoke who were easily excelled in their work by a half dozen plebes. Thus it happened that when the hour's work was finished, the two disgruntled yearlings were boiling with suppressed anger, and were eager for a chance to come to close quarters.

The opportunity to do so came in the most unexpected manner. Anxious to discover any unusual talent among the plebes, Haverill ordered a portion of the players to take the north end of the gridiron and run back punts until downed in the open field.

"Come on, Dug.," said O'Connor, "Let 's try our hand," and the two friends trotted out among the runners while with a quick exchange of glances Hardin and Smoke took the opposite side.

The first five punts went to as many plebes, all of whom were downed in the field and two of them by the combined attack of Hardin and Smoke.

"Give it to Atwell," yelled some one on the side lines, and instantly Haverill shot a beautiful spiral straight above the latter's head.

"I 'm in front of you," shouted Rory, and as he heard the thud of the ball in Douglas' arms he sprang forward at full speed.

"Put out Smoke, Rory, put out Smoke," said Douglas fiercely as he closed on his room-mate and clutched the ball with a grip of steel.

As Smoke crouched for his tackle, Rory plunged upon him and as Douglas swerved past him Sam rolled headlong beneath the assault. A shout went up from the side-lines as Douglas sped forward, and then ten paces distant stood Hardin, his teeth set and his eyes blazing with malice. Straight at him Douglas sprang and then he

seemed to be literally running in the air as he leaped away to avoid the tackle.

Hardin had tackled hard, and he fairly stood on his head with the force of his unbroken plunge as Douglas shot past untouched. In front the players were rushing at him and he mustered all his strength, all his speed, as he plunged forward. An outstretched hand warded off the first tackle, a lightning change of direction evaded the next, and the flying lad turned towards the last group that stood between him and the goal.

The field was in an uproar. "Atwell, Atwell, go it, boy, go it!" shrieked a hundred voices, and his speed seemed to redouble at the encouraging shout. Three dizzy zigzags and then into the group he plunged, staggered under a poorly-aimed tackle, and emerged on the other side running like a young deer. A great shout rose as he crossed the goal line and touched down the ball, and an enthusiastic group of spectators rushed down the field to congratulate the wonderful little runner.

"You're a star," said Swayne as he rushed up and patted Douglas on the back. "There is n't another man on the team who could do that. I

would give up my best girl to you if you will do it against Annapolis."

Douglas panted his appreciation of this magnanimous offer and the team trotted laughing from the field.

Douglas was in high spirits that night when he dashed up to his room immediately after supper. In one brilliant run he had demonstrated his superiority over all other competitors and practically clinched his claim to a place. There was to be a meeting of the foot-ball men in the gymnasium immediately after release from quarters and he had resolved to take advantage of the time to write a letter home.

He had been at work on the letter for only a few moments when the sound of a loud, harsh voice came to his ears. Two persons seemed to be speaking in Smoke's room, and the voice of one seemed to be rising in a threat and that of the other seemed to be pleading piteously for silence. Douglas listened for a moment and then a half shriek brought him to his feet with a start, and he dashed through the hall and flung open the door.

A ragged, bleary-eyed civilian stood with his

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hand raised over Smoke's head, while the latter was cowering before him in abject horror. In the half light of the room Douglas thought he saw a weapon, and he sprang forward, seized the man by the upraised hand and flung him backwards on the floor, and then he saw that the hand was empty.

"What do you mean by entering a room in barracks?" he demanded in some perplexity.

"That 's my business," said the civilian as he pulled himself to his feet.

"Hold him at bay, Smoke," said Douglas, "while I get my rifle. I 'll march him down to the guard-house as a prisoner."

"Oh, no, no, no," whined Sam piteously as he rushed up to Douglas, "don't arrest him, don't stop him . . . he 'll leave barracks without that."

And Douglas gazed at Sam Smoke in utter astonishment as the civilian slouched out of the room and walked downstairs.

CHAPTER XIV

THE WEST POINT-ANNAPOLIS GAME



TWENTY-FIVE thousand people thronged the grand-stands at Franklin Field, Philadelphia, and gazed expectantly down on the gridiron on which West Point and Annapolis were to meet once more in their annual championship contest. Upon one side of the field, the solid cadet gray was banked in successive tiers and flanked by a surging mass of enthusiastic partisans whose flags of black and gold and gray danced like the waves of a stormy sea.

Straight across the field, the battalion of midshipmen in their blue and gold, stood out like a brilliant spot of color against the more subdued civilian throng about them. On these two sides of the rectangle, sixteen thousand people were arrayed face to face, and among them all there was not a neutral person. Back in the spirit of their boyhood days, these soldiers and sailors of

the Republic waved their flags and joined in the defiant shouts of the rival academies.

Upon the ends of the fields sat the mixed assemblies, and here the black and gold and gray quivered side by side with the navy blue, and intense partisanship gave place to a friendly rivalry.

A more distinguished audience never gathered to witness an athletic contest. In the box at the foot of the navy grand-stand sat the President and several members of the cabinet, while on either side of him sat gray-haired admirals and younger captains of the ships whose names will go down to history among those of Nelson, Farragut, Porter, and Cushing.

On the army's side sat the commanding general, members of the cabinet, and sober-faced men who had grown old on battle-fields. All these had gathered to witness the sons of their alma mater battle for the glory of the old school on the Hudson, and among those on whom they depended for success no name was mentioned more prominently than that of Douglas Atwell, the now famous half-back of the academy team. Three weeks before the date of the game Douglas

had captured Bill Hardin's "scalp" and won his transfer from the goats, thereby permitting him to play in this great final contest. The lad shivered as he thought of the rewards of victory and the consequences of defeat.

This was to be the sixth game of the foot-ball series, and the records of the five games already played showed that victory had three times perched on the banners of the navy team. A triumph to-day for the army would tie the series and raise interest to fever heat in future contests.

Fully realizing this, the captain of the navy team begged his players to continue the record of victories that had marked their past achievements, while Haverill exhorted his men to complete the work of a successful season by a crushing defeat of their old-time enemy.

"With a much poorer team last year," said he, "we smothered the navy with a score of 17 to 5, and we must repeat the dose to-day. You've played hard before, but those games were child's play to the game you've got to play to-day. Jump the middies off their feet from the start and give them no chance to come back. There are twenty-five thousand people here to watch the game, but

besides these the eyes of the whole army are upon you, and each man is individually responsible for the result. Play for the honor of the academy as a soldier would fight for the honor of the flag. Come on."

Haverill had never before spoken with such fervor, but no general ever won a more hearty response from his columns of assault than did the big captain to-day. Behind their redoubtable leader the team trotted out of the dressing-room and dashed across the field, the very picture of sturdy health and manly vigor.

At their first appearance, the band pealed out a welcoming crash, and from the West Point grandstands a shout rolled across the field, such a shout as might have greeted a famous gladiator upon his entrance into a Roman amphitheatre. With megaphones pressed against their lips, the corps of cadets poured forth their spirited call—"Rah, rah, ray; rah, rah, ray; West Point, West Point, Armée; ray, ray, ray; U. S. M. A. West Point! Team! Team! Team!"

The cry had scarcely died away when the flags of the navy grand-stand leaped into the air and the fine call of the midshipmen rang out as their

team appeared upon the field. Small, alert, swift as young greyhounds, they swept across the gridiron and at once began a series of spectacular punts and catches. It was beautiful work. Full of confidence, the navy was eager for the play to begin; the army could not see it start too soon. The navy was as confident of victory as the army was certain that it could not lose. The partisans of both sides shared the beliefs of their teams and expressed their convictions in a series of yells that fairly drowned all other sounds. As the calls surged back and forth across the field, the West Point team raced through its signal practice with a smoothness of finish that seemed to augur well for its success and then the players trotted off to the side-lines and wrapped themselves in blankets while the middies warmed up for the fray.

Snap and precision characterized every feature of their work as the team worked down the field, and then the full-back dropped back for a kick. Thud! Up shot the ball, spinning like a top upon its longer axis, sailing forward fifty-five yards before it touched the earth, and then the team dashed off the field amid a hurricane of

applause from their enthusiastic admirers, while through the megaphones came the navy's song in celebration of the victory which they felt so sure of winning.

As West Point returned its defiant answer, Haverill and Marlin stood in the middle of the gridiron with the referee and umpire and called the turn on the coin as it whirled and glistened in the air. Then Haverill raised his hand and motioned towards the enemy's goal. He had won the toss and had chosen to fight with the wind at his back.

How the West Point grand-stands yelled! How the megaphones roared out the corps' yell with "Haverill, Haverill, Haverill" at the end. Then the teams danced out to their places and all was ready for the crucial test of strength.

"Are you ready, Captain Haverill?"

"Ready, sir."

"Are you ready, Captain Marlin?"

"Ready, sir."

"Play!"

Marlin dashed forward and the ball sailed upward under his terrific kick. It was a repetition of the beautiful drive that had won that

burst of enthusiasm from the navy a moment before and filled the West Point adherents with vague apprehensions, for Haverill could never equal that magnificent effort. Indeed there was cause for alarm, for in spite of an adverse wind the ball was speeding on like a rocket toward Douglas Atwell, who stood within five paces of the West Point goal.

"Mine, mine," he cried as he sprang lightly forward, and the world seemed to stand still while he waited for that whirling, gyrating, swerving thing to descend. Though he could hear the mad rush of a dozen men, and the thud of colliding bodies as the middies struggled furiously to reach him, yet his faithful eye never left that one object on which hung the fate of the game, until it crashed into his outstretched arms. Then with one quick glance about him he sprang forward, every nerve afire, Swayne racing in front of him. Straight toward the whirl of struggling men he plunged, thrust Swayne headlong into the nearest antagonist, and then turned across the swarming field.

Not an opening any place, the only hope lay in outstripping the fastest runner. Head back,

every muscle strained to its utmost, the frantic lad raced away like a frightened deer pursued by the hounds. Inch by inch he gained, a foot, a yard—he was clear of all save one—Marlin, when he whirled once more towards the enemy's goal.

“Can he pass Marlin? Can he pass that flying sprinter?”

A shout suspended at half breath was delivered with fearful vehemence as Marlin plunged forward like a diver and struck Douglas with his outstretched hands. Over shot the gallant lad, over and over, but the very force of the fall raised him to his feet, the ball still clutched in his arms, and with a wild tumult raging within him he leaped onward, onward toward the goal.

But what was this? A shriek of the whistle came to his ear and then his dizzy senses comprehended the situation. That tremendous plunge by Marlin had forced him outside the gridiron five yards beyond the center of the field.

The blue ranks in the navy grand-stand sank back in their seats with a gasp of relief, while the West Point adherents went wild with enthusiasm. With megaphones directed straight down upon the panting team they poured out the

concentrated volume of their voices, "Rah, rah, ray; rah, rah, ray; West Point, West Point, Armée; ray, ray, ray; U. S. M. A., West Point. Atwell, Atwell, Atwell!"

But the hero of this call scarcely heard it. Mind intent upon the game he trotted in fifteen yards from the side-lines, and it was West Point's ball and first down.

"12, 16, 23, 47," shouted Swayne as he sprang to his place as quarter-back.

"Wait a minute," gasped Haverill. It was his signal for a plunge on right guard, but the peculiar tone of his voice forced every one to turn toward the big full-back and captain. Haverill was pale and almost staggering, while he unconsciously held his hand to his injured side.

"What 's the matter?" said Swayne anxiously as he dropped back beside his captain.

"Oh, nothing," answered Haverill, but the look in his face belied his words, and the big fellow sank trembling to the ground, gasping for breath. He had contributed like a hero to that beautiful run by Douglas, but the work had cost him dearly. Two minutes later, however, he

conquered the pain that gnawed at his heart, leaped to his feet, and was ready for play.

"Right at them, boys," said Swayne as he prepared for action and called out his signal.

"Watch it, men, watch it," cried Marlin. "'12, 16, 23, 47,' was full-back's signal. The play was on guard."

Douglas heard it with consternation. In one unfortunate stroke, Haverill had been severely injured and the key to the signal code had been handed to the alert Annapolis team. All eyes were therefore on Hammond, the plebe half-back, when the ball leaped into action, for every one knew that the quarter-back would call on neither an injured player nor a spent runner for this first play. Hammond came at the opposing line with all his characteristic speed and force with Douglas, Swayne and Haverill thrusting him along, but the whole navy team met the play and crushed it down with a gain of but one poor yard.

"Second down and four yards to gain."

How the navy yelled as the next play crumbled against the strong defense, but it was necessary to show that the army could make its required distance and Douglas heard his signal for his

first try. Like a battering ram he plunged into the line, but the play had been anticipated and in spite of all his efforts he was crushed to the earth.

"Third down and two yards to gain!" Haverill nodded in response to Swayne's inquiring glance. Back stepped the big full-back and over the field floated the navy's awful siren call as Haverill prepared to kick. Forward plunged the backs and ends and Douglas met his antagonist and fought as a rear guard fights for the life of its column, but it seemed an age before that resounding thud announced that the ball was safely launched on its flight. It was a weak punt, however, but the big fellow staggered gamely forward to follow it up and conceal the agony that was sapping his strength.

His plucky effort was unnecessary, for the ends had gotten down with the ball and smothered Marlin as he caught the punt. It was first down for the navy, twenty yards from their own goal, and the West Point supporters were full of hope. Across the field their megaphones boomed their fierce shouts of exultation and defiance—but on with the game.

Like a flash the navy delivered the first blow. Over bowled the tackle and Marlin came through the line like a runaway engine. Douglas and Hammond met him fairly and squarely and hurled him down, but not until he had gained five yards straight through the line. The tumult which arose at this show of strength was redoubled when Marlin sprang to his feet and a few seconds later repeated his first magnificent dash. On came the navy backs in turn, each going freely through the West Point line by a play which seemed to defy analysis. No sooner had Douglas decided on the character of the attack than a new variation developed assailing the line from flank to flank with equal success at all points. Within five minutes after the beginning of play the West Point defense had been shattered and the navy had demonstrated its scoring ability. There was just one hope—such fearful work would exhaust the attack—but there—there—Marlin had already recognized that fact and was springing back for a quick kick.

“Back, Atwell, back!” shouted Haverill, and the lad sped down the field to assist Swayne in handling the punt. Scarcely had he arrived

when a resounding thud announced that the ball was in air and Douglas caught a glimpse of the whirling oval as he turned and dashed in front of Swayne.

"It 's mine," shouted the latter, and Douglas prepared to meet the attack of the ends. Swayne was close behind him when by a brilliant manœuver Douglas avoided the first man and turned straight toward the center of the field. He had hoped to draw all the enemy in one direction and escape them by a sudden zigzag, but the ruse failed. Out from the confused mass leaped Marlin and true as a bullet speeding at its mark, he raced at Douglas. One object in view—to crush that dazzling interference, Marlin plunged forward regardless of consequences.

"Put him out, Dug.," shouted Swayne between his teeth and Douglas gathered himself for the effort. With a sickening crash the two lads collided and rolled headlong to the earth, but Swayne was saved.

On the latter sped, dodging, whirling, electrifying the audience which sprang up in their seats, just as Swayne came down by a beautiful tackle.

Forty yards right through the thickest of the

fight, and the ball was back at the point from which the navy began its successful march down the field!

Forty yards, but at what a cost! Douglas was writhing in agony where he had fallen while Haverill lay still as in death. In vain the corps' yell rolled out across the gridiron affixing the name of Haverill, in vain the eager lads sang the song which recited his deeds of glory.

"He's out," said the surgeon almost at the first glance, "take him to the side-lines." and the limp figure of the team's captain was carried from the field.

Lieut. Short, the West Point coach, paused for a moment in his restless pacing up and down the side-lines and then turned to the group of substitutes. "Go in, O'Connor," said he, and a great cheer greeted Rory as he trotted out on the field and assisted his dizzy room-mate to his feet. Haverill, the greatest line-breaker and defensive half-back on the eastern gridiron, was out of the game and the West Point adherents groaned as they realized his loss. Rory must do his best to fill his place and try to supply in speed what he lacked in weight and strength.

"Are you all right, Dug.?" he said anxiously as he patted the plucky boy on the back.

"Fine as a fiddle, never felt better," said Douglas gamely as he stepped into his place and prepared to play, but the blood was streaming from his wounded nose and his brain was giddy with the shock of collision. Over the field swept the corps yell with "Atwell, Atwell, Atwell!" at the end, and the blood leaped through the boy's veins as he heard it and he was himself once more.

"23, 26, 29, 32," came Swayne's signal, and into the line Rory shot with the ball, Douglas, Swayne and Hammond, the plucky plebe, thrusting, pushing, pulling him on, but when the whistle terminated the exhausting struggle only three yards had been gained into the enemy's country. The point of weakness must be found and Swayne could not desist until he found it.

"14, 17, 25, 43." It was Douglas in the tandem on left tackle.

The line rocked, swayed, and parted under the shock of impact and Douglas was through and all but free. Ten yards right through that unbreakable line! How the West Point grand-

stands roared, "Atwell! Atwell! He 's the boy. Corps yell for Atwell!"

"Up, up," shouted Swayne, the possibilities of victory becoming apparent for the first time, and as the panting lads sprang into their places his sharp signal rang out above the din of shouting and cheering.

Through the line the play crashed again, Hammond carrying the ball, but Marlin met the tandem in flank and hurled it down with a gain of four yards.

"Come on, come on," cried Swayne, and he and Douglas yanked the players into their places. The navy defense crumbled before the attack and it was West Point's ball and first down once more.

"Touch down! Touch down!" roared the megaphones, and on came the tandem like a javelin, penetrating, irresistible, and the ball was twenty yards from the navy's goal.

Douglas once more, and with all his strength the lad drove forward, crashed, struggled on, tearing away from the grip of hostile hands as the panther tears away from the jaws of the trap—to sink at last ten yards from the goal.

His face was bruised and battered; blood gushed from his nose, but what cared he? His blood was willing sacrifice, and agony was sweet if they but gave him victory for the colors he wore. Again he leaped to his feet, but the whistle halted him in his tracks.

Gregory, the plebe tackle, whose brilliant work had made all these gains possible, was rolling on the ground, his knee wrenched beyond repair, and with sinking heart Douglas saw him carried to the side-lines, for not a substitute did the academy possess to take his place. Within the very shadow of the goal-posts the staunch support of the line was withdrawn and Douglas turned eagerly toward the group of substitutes to see—Sam Smoke coming in to take Gregory's place.

"Right on the same spot," said Swayne, as he stood among the players and tried to encourage them for the final effort, but his face betrayed the anxiety he felt. Behind Smoke the tandem formed and plunged forward but the harmless weapon now doubled up like a wave against a stone wall and the navy grand-stand shook with the cheer that arose. It was second down and four and one half yards to gain.

"It 's going to you, Douglas," whispered Swayne, "and for the love of the old academy make it go."

Douglas crouched in the tandem formation, every muscle hard as whip-chords. Back came the ball straight as an arrow and the lad sprang forward clutching it to his breast. With a throb of joy he felt the resistance yield and then Sam Smoke rolled headlong out of the line and Marlin had Douglas by the legs.

"Third down and three yards to gain." Another try at the line would surely fail. There was just one chance for a score and Swayne was calling the signal. It was for a try for goal from the field, and Douglas dropped back in obedience to the command. In every previous game the expert foot of Haverill was ever ready to boot the oval between the posts when a touch down was impossible, but Haverill was gone and either Douglas or Swayne must make the try and the little quarter-back had chosen to evade the responsibility.

One glance at the shining bar and Douglas thrust forward his hands to receive the ball. Too eager to shout, every person in that vast as-

semblage breathlessly watched the little West Pointer on whom the academy's hopes rested. Back came the ball, straight and true, and Douglas caught it as the navy's backs and ends rushed furiously forward. Six feet to the right and front he could see the desperate struggle to reach him as he stepped forward, dropped the ball and kicked with all his strength. Up shot the oval, swaying and curving, far above the touch of the outstretched hands, on, on, breasting the wind like a homing pigeon, over the bar and into the field beyond.

Douglas had scored, and the West Point grandstand was a scene of pandemonium. Through the megaphone came the derisive shout, "North point, south point, east point, West Point, Five Points!"

To the untrained spectator it looked like an easy West Point victory, but the men of that panting, dirt-stained line knew that the only hope of victory lay in a death struggle on the defensive. Aside from Roderick O'Connor, the team had no valuable substitutes and another injury would read disaster. The navy realized it too, and once more Marlin drove the ball down the

field, but this time he cautiously planted it beyond the reach of Swayne or Douglas and big Bailly who caught it was downed in his tracks. No hope of gaining, Swayne shot forward a high punt which the wind swept down the field and the navy back was smothered with West Point players when he finally secured the bounding ball. It was the navy's turn now and they jumped at the line with the fury of men with a defeat to avenge.

Straight through the ranks they plunged where Douglas, Rory and Hammond met and downed each player with what awful effort. Back the West Point line was forced two, three, five yards at each attack, and with but five minutes to play the ball was within five yards of the goal. Bleeding, almost sick with exhaustion, Douglas fought beside Rory and Swayne to stave off the impending disaster, yet it was "first down" again and only four and one half yards to the goal. Up to this point Marlin had avoided Smoke, but now upon this weak point he hurled his final attack. Douglas plunged into him as he came through and brought him down one yard from the goal. Behind Sam Smoke he

crouched and when the next play came he flung the shirking fellow into it and the navy had still a yard to gain or fail to score. The next instant a tangled mass of struggling men sank between the goal-posts, barely two inches over the line.

Douglas clung to the goal-posts, all his strength gone, while Marlin kicked the goal and the half ended. Annapolis 6; West Point 5.

Douglas dragged himself from the field for the ten minute rest between halves and when the teams trotted out again for the final trial of strength he knew that only accident could save the team from defeat. A moment later he and Rory were fighting the fight of despair against the play they could not stop.

Forty yards of furious gruelling work and then the navy dropped the ball and Swayne was upon it like a flash. One try at attack and he was convinced that his tired men had lost the power to gain and he dropped back to kick. The ball went high, tumbling and erratic, and Marlin, the star of the navy team, made the mistake of the day by leaping into the air and touching the ball with his hand as it shot over his head and bounded on.

After the ball the nimble middy dashed, Douglas and Rory close upon his heels. Realizing the import of the play both grand-stands leaped to their feet as all three frantic lads plunged for the ball behind the goal-posts. Marlin had it, but Douglas was hugging him to the earth and the field reverberated with the shout. West Point had scored a safety. Army 7; Navy 6.

The excitement of the next ten minutes of play will live long in the memory of the spectators of that heroic struggle. Again and again the distance was measured, but each time the navy was safe by an inch and with only four minutes left to play, the score stood unchanged.

Douglas Atwell's clothes were wet with blood yet with never failing courage he plunged into each play and lay groaning upon his back unable to rise without help. Then Hammond was hurt and the last strong helper was gone from the second line of defense. Side by side the three brave fellows fought against the humiliation of defeat until the ball rested again almost beneath the goal-posts. In vain Douglas urged on the tired men, in vain he forced Sam Smoke into the play. Through him and over him the desperate navy

backs plunged, between the goal-posts and on to a touch down. Marlin failed at the goal; a moment later the game was over, and Douglas turned staggering from the field sobbing like a broken-hearted child. Out on the bulletin board the score read Annapolis 11, West Point 7, and the overjoyed middies were surging across the field behind their band in celebration of their signal victory.

CHAPTER XV

DOUGLAS ATWELL DRAGS AN "L. P." ¹ TO THE HOP



THE Annapolis game was now only a bitter memory, that of a battle lost after a heroic struggle, and the painful story of that disaster had ceased to interest even the victims. Other matters were forcing themselves upon the attention of the corps of cadets and there was no time for the past. From the first call for reveille at 5:45 a. m. until taps at 10:00 o'clock at night, every day was filled with events of the most thrilling importance to the men who composed the goat section in yearling math. The examination which must determine their fitness to continue in the ranks of the "black and gold and gray" was but three weeks distant and many there were who looked into the future with quaking hearts, and Douglas Atwell was one of them.

Three weeks before the Annapolis game he

¹ "L. P." — An abbreviation of uncertain origin, meaning a poor dancer.

won his transfer from the goats, but the shock of defeat and the injuries he had suffered in that fierce contest had temporarily paralyzed his powers of concentration and he was again deficient and on the very brink of disaster.

Night after night Rory had helped him through the maddening intricacies of analytical geometry, but the effort seemed of no avail. The record of each week repeated the same old story—excellent work in “descript.” offset by hopeless deficiency in analytical geometry, thus reducing the total for the week below the necessary average for safety.

French, the bane of the existence of a few, had no terrors for him, while drawing was a delightful pastime in which he stood almost at the head of the class. Analytical geometry alone had completely mastered him and filled each moment with the torturing fear of final disaster.

On this Saturday night in December, Douglas sat alone in his room gloomily examining his marks for the week. Never before had he worked harder, never had he failed more completely. Even Bill Hardin ranked him for the week and their totals for the term differed by

only a little more than one unit, "and one more glaring recitation will clear away that small barrier," groaned Douglas, "and will make me Bill's victim."

The battalion had just returned from supper, and two and one half hours of free time were available before taps. "What is to be done for the night?" mused the weary lad. "Study?" He passed his hand across his forehead with a feeling of nausea. "Of what use is it to study? None, except to satisfy my conscience that I have done all that is possible for a hopeless goat."

He walked aimlessly around the room abstractedly tearing a hop card to shreds, and then he paused with a start—it was the card he had made out for Rory for the hop that was to take place that night.

"Ugh! How stupid," said he, "I'm going insane." Then he picked up the fragments and re-copied the list of names in the beautiful style which no other man in the corps could excel.

A step sounded on the landing as he finished and he recognized the tread of Sam Smoke, though it seemed hurried and unnatural.

"Sam's afraid of something," he mused, "poor

old fellow, I 'm sorry for him," and then he sat back in his chair and a flood of recollections swept through his mind. Except upon the foot-ball field, not a word had passed between them since the night Douglas found him cringing before a dirty civilian in his room. What power that man had over Sam, Douglas had not even remotely guessed, but believing that he had unwittingly stumbled upon some degenerate relative or friend who had intruded upon Sam's privacy, Douglas had not mentioned the incident even to Rory O'Connor. Both the man and the incident might have passed from Douglas' mind had it not been for the fact that three days before the departure of the team for Philadelphia, and while the yearling class was returning from instruction in riding, the same bleary-eyed individual suddenly appeared in the road, and Sam Smoke nearly fainted at sight of him. The stillness of barracks, the stealthy haste of Sam's entrance to his room recalled the night of this man's first appearance, and Douglas was lost in conjecture as to his peculiar relations with the unfortunate cadet who seemed to fear him so much.

Call to quarters pealed out across the plain, and while the last notes were still trembling through the room the sound of merry laughter reached his ears and the rush of foot-steps was heard on the stairs. An instant later, the door was flung open and Swayne, Rory, and Bobby MacGregor dashed into the room.

"Douglas," said Swayne excitedly, "I want you to drag a femme to the hop for me to-night. I've just received a letter from my sister who says that I must get the girl a partner. Well, I've done my best on very short notice but not a hopoid¹ is available as an escort. You've got to do this favor for me, old boy, or I will be in a terrible fix. I know that you have never been to a hop in your life, but sister says the femme's a poor little L. P.—so you won't have to dance—just sit on the side-lines—"

"And watch the game until the referee blows his whistle—just like foot-ball, old boy," broke in Bobby MacGregor. "It's awful easy, Dug. Come on boys, let's dress him," and Bobby plunged into the alcove and dragged out Douglas' dress coat and a pair of his "spooniest" trousers.

¹ "Hopoid." A cadet who habitually attends hops.

"Hoot mon," shouted Bobby as he swung the clothing about his head, "hold the wee laddie while I dress him in fine raiment."

Douglas stood like one hypnotized. The very thought of attending a dance brought a feeling of terror to his heart, but Swayne was actually asking him not only to attend but to "drag—drag," mind you, and make believe "that it was all 'pairfectly' lovely," and to stick words together as chidren stick pieces of paper with mucilage and call this thing social conversation. Oh, horrors! He could have shouted his refusal in a voice like thunder, but there stood Swayne pleading for a favor, Swayne whom he so much yearned to please.

"I—I—" he stammered hopelessly as he gazed from one to the other while Rory kept behind him and smothered his laughter.

"Hoot mon!" said Bobby in a low theatrical tone. "Show more gallantry, ye wee bit of a birkie, why the lassie is sighing like a furnace for ye in the hotel yonder."

"In the hotel?" said Douglas in consternation as he realized her terrible proximity.

"Aye, aye, sir, the same. The lady awaits."

"But I can't dance, I can't talk," said Douglas, distractedly.

"It 's practically only a case of escorting the girl, Douglas," said Swayne reassuringly. "I have made out the card but my partner is at Highland Falls while Miss Dryden is at the hotel. I must find some one for escort and if you don't wish to dance you might sit out the dragger's¹ numbers. I 'm sure you 'll find each other interesting enough."

"You bet you will," urged Bobby. "Let her do all the talking, Dug., tell her it 's your busy day and that you 're short on the talk. Besides, 'sister says she 's an L. P.,' does n't she, Swayne? What 's her name anyhow?"

"Miss Alice Dryden," said Swayne glancing at the letter.

"Dryden, Dryden, why I 've met several Drydens—I dragged one myself. Oh yes, she 's an L. P. all right enough—and old, great guns, Dug., she is old—forty if she 's a day. She 'll talk to you like a mother; why, my boy, before she gets through she will make you think that she brought you up from the time you were a

¹"Dragger."—A cadet who escorts a girl to the hop.

baby. Odd's blood, Dug., be kind to the wee lassie."

Douglas was standing in a brown study scarcely hearing Bobby's random remarks when Swayne broke in. "Well, Douglas, will you take her?"

"Yes," said he as if acknowledging receipt of a death sentence, "as it 's a favor to you, I will do my best."

"Thank you, old boy," exclaimed Swayne, as he rushed from the room. "Rory will manage the introduction at the hotel. I can't even be with you. You are a dandy chap and I won't forget your help."

"Odd's blood, 't is well!" said Bobby tragically as he strode across the room and halted at the door, "I will follow milord's movements to-night with great interest."

Rory had restrained his amusement with much difficulty for he knew that this was serious business to Douglas and that no small inducement could get him out to a hop. Swayne and himself were perhaps the only men in the corps for whom Douglas would do this favor. With becoming solemnity, therefore, Rory assisted him as he set

about the work of preparation. From the clothespress Douglas pulled forth a daintily wrapped pair of dancing shoes that had never yet seen service, and on his bed he spread a pair of immaculate lisle thread gloves and his excellent fitting full dress suit. It was an impressive ceremony but finally the work was completed and three quarters of an hour later, in a silence which grew more impressive each instant, Douglas was approaching the brilliantly lighted hotel with Rory well to the front as an advance guard.

"I will send in my cards with your name written across the face," said the latter, "and just as soon as the introduction has been completed, I will hunt up my own partner and we will go across to Cullom together."

Douglas nodded submissively—he had agreed to drain the bitter cup to its dregs. They were already within the hedge of the hotel and he felt his heart fairly sinking into his boots as he saw the glitter of bell buttons and the fluffy figures of the young ladies as they descended to the 'bus, and realized that he must repeat that performance. To all this sort of thing he was as complete a stranger as the refugee on a desert island

and with just as much antipathy he shrank from entering the social world. But Rory was dashing up the steps of the hotel and there was nothing to do but to follow.

"Write your name, Dug.," said Rory unconcernedly as he laid out his cards upon the desk, and Douglas did not even notice that the cards were upside down as he complied.

"Mrs. and Miss Dryden," said Rory to the colored waiter. "We 'll await them at the parlor door."

A moment later, the two lads stood in the hall filled with exquisitely dressed young ladies and equally resplendent chaperones. Douglas gasped. He must try to make believe that this was the regular thing with him, try to conceal his gnawing embarrassment, yet a fish high and dry on a sandy beach was enjoying comforts as compared with him. He wondered vaguely if the unfortunate girl he was to "drag" was among that bevy. Swayne's sister had described her as "a poor little L. P." and Douglas half remembered Bobby MacGregor's reference to a maiden of forty, and in his heart he hoped the description was no exaggeration.

"Did you find Miss Dryden?" broke in Rory

on his reflections as he arrested the colored waiter in his rush through the hall.

"No, seh, I ain't done found Miss Dryden yet, seh," said the colored man in a loud tone. "I ain't had no time to git to Miss Dryden's room, seh."

At the sound of the name, a young lady arrayed in one of the most beautiful gowns in the assemblage, turned about and with a half suppressed exclamation, stepped forward with outstretched hand.

"Why Roderick O'Connor, how glad I am to see you!"

Rory was beside himself with delight as he explained that he never dreamed that the Miss Alice Dryden whom he was to meet to-night was the friend of his boyhood days.

Douglas nearly fainted. This magnificent creature, the most exquisitely dressed young woman in the hotel, was the "poor little L. P." whom he was to "drag" to the hop. For one terrible moment he gazed in unspeakable dismay, while Miss Alice Dryden and Roderick O'Connor renewed a friendship that had been formed in the nursery, and then Rory suddenly came to and



"HOW GLAD I AM TO SEE YOU!"

realized that his business was to introduce this beautiful friend of his childhood to her "dragger."

"Pardon me," he said, "my happiness at meeting you again put all other thoughts out of my head, but I 'm stealing another's pleasure. Miss Dryden, let me introduce my very best friend and room-mate, Mr. Atwell, who is to be your escort to-night."

Douglas had already backed up against the wall, and as those beautiful young eyes flashed upon him he wished that he could break through the partition, leap out of the window and race like a fugitive for barracks and the oblivion of his room. Many a time in the Philippines he had charged with unfaltering courage upon the glittering bayonets of the enemy; again and again he had met, in hand to hand conflict, the most savage foe that the jungles of Luzon could produce, but never in his life did such a feeling of terror sweep over him as when this "dear little L. P." faced him with her jeweled fingers outstretched to grasp his own.

His tongue almost declined to speak, but at last he stammered, "I—I 'm—very much pleased

to meet you again," though he had never met Miss Dryden before in all his life.

Without releasing his hand, she half turned to Rory. "Mr. Atwell did you say? Why, you are the wonderful half-back who played such a magnificent game against Annapolis. How glad I am to have a real hero take me to the hop."

"H—m" said Rory, as his face lit up, "you did n't happen to notice any other heroes on the field?"

For a second Miss Dryden looked puzzled. "Why Rory," said she, "were you the Mr. O'Connor who substituted for poor Mr. Haverill? I did n't recognize you at all, but oh, you did play well."

Further conversation on this delightful football theme was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Mrs. Dryden. Under the spell of the gridiron, Douglas had partially regained his composure, but at the sight of Miss Alice's mother he was thrown into a new panic. In all the immense dignity of her fifty years experience in a world that moved at her command, Mrs. Dryden stood with her jeweled head tilted back and a lorgnette to her eye as she critically examined

the two cadets with whom her daughter was speaking so freely.

Douglas unconsciously came to attention as if accosted by his commanding officer and the startled expression in his face caused his companions to look in the direction of the intruder. For some inexplainable reason the same motion caused Mrs. Dryden to drop her lorgnette with a sense of embarrassment as if caught in an act of unpardonable rudeness.

"Oh, how you startled me," said Miss Alice, and quick to recover from an awkward situation she resumed—"Why, mother, I came to West Point believing myself an utter stranger and behold the door opens and in steps Roderick O'Connor, my old playmate."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Dryden, "why Roderick, I am delighted to see you, I did not know that you had become a cadet. Well, it seems scarcely a year since you were running about New York in knickerbockers. It is so fortunate that we have you to-night—"

"The pleasure is all mine I assure you, Mrs. Dryden," broke in Rory anticipating an unpleasant remark, "but the honor of escorting your

daughter to the hop falls to my room-mate. Mr. Atwell, let me present you to Mrs. Dryden."

The lady turned upon Douglas once more; a magnificent diamond aigrette quivered in the folds of her hair, her gown of white satin glistened with spangles, and to use Rory's subsequent description, "the pair promptly crossed rapiers."

On this her first visit to West Point, Mrs. Dryden was at a loss to understand the custom which permitted her daughter to be escorted to the hop by an utter stranger, and her manner betrayed her astonishment. Partially conscious of this, a chill crept over Douglas as he advanced with great dignity and met this lady of a world he had never known and which he hoped with all his heart that he would never be forced to enter. The effect of her manner was to restore him to his official self and awaken an antagonism he could not understand. He had arrived at the hotel in a ferment of excitement lest he should offend some rule of propriety, but that one rude sweep of the lorgnette had inspired him with a contempt of the artificiality of it all, and he was cool again as on parade. With no consternation

therefore, he saw Rory withdraw to look after his own partner leaving him alone at his "task."

In silence he escorted his two companions down the steps and then assisted them into the big stage. He was about to close the door when Mrs. Dryden remarked, "Are you not coming with us, Mr. Atwell?"

"No, Mrs. Dryden," said he, "it is contrary to regulations for a cadet to ride. I will await you at the door of Cullom Hall."

"That seems very awkward," said she in a tone of impatience. "Please come in—no one will see you."

"That is not the reason why I walk," said Douglas decisively. "It is a point of honor with a cadet to take no improper advantage of the permit under which he reports for a hop. I regret, therefore, that I must deny myself the pleasure of your company until the 'bus reaches the hall."

He bowed and closed the door with the air of one who decided questions beyond debate, and as the 'bus rolled away Miss Alice smiled to herself with a mixture of satisfaction and amusement. Though some surprises were to be expected at West Point, yet Alice was at a loss to

know what was coming next. She was going to a hop with a man whom she had never seen before, to dance with men whom she would probably never see again, while her dear mother, to whom the world had bowed in abject submission, had been bundled unceremoniously into a dingy old stage-coach containing a foul-smelling oil lamp and told that to accompany her would be dishonorable.

"I feel like a loving cup—I 'm being handed around," she whispered to her mother, and then burst into a fit of laughter which her dear parent could neither understand nor appreciate.

When the 'bus arrived in front of Cullom Hall, Douglas was standing like a sentinel to perform the rest of his assigned duty. It was only necessary to follow in the wake of the stream of young people that poured into the hall and turn into the capacious dressing-rooms. In a moment he had completed his toilet and with Miss Alice Dryden's hop-card attached to his bell button he stepped out into the hall to await her re-appearance.

About the door, some twenty "draggers" were waiting patiently for their partners to quit the

dressng-room mirrors, about which they hung readjusting rebellious curls and giving the last fond touches of the powder puffs to chilled nose tips. While there was something active to do, Douglas could forget the programme for the night, but now as he stood waiting he suddenly realized that his name was down on Miss Dryden's card for four dances, and this on the representations of Swayne and Bobby MacGregor that he was to drag "a poor little L. P." who rejoiced in maiden blushes at the age of forty years plus. Was it a plot to deliver him over to this awful torture?

His indignation had almost reached a climax when Miss Alice and her mother passed through the portières into the hall. In her wraps, the young lady had startled Douglas with a sense of her wealth and beauty; in her evening gown she drove him into panic. He scarcely knew where he was as he walked along the corridor between the busts and epitaphs of dead heroes and tried in vain to frame a dignified confession to the effect that he could not dance, but when the three reached the bronze doors of the ball-room he had not been able to utter a word.

Rory O'Connor and Mrs. Barton were receiving, and during that brief exchange of greetings and introductions, Rory had time to say a few words to the charming friend of his childhood which made her face light up with interest and amusement.

The beautiful ball-room was already thronged with guests, the orchestra sat with instruments poised for action and it was but one minute to eight o'clock when Douglas reached a vacant place along the cushioned seats and deposited his fair charge and her haughty mother. In vain he waited for the opportunity to proclaim his shortcomings, but Miss Alice engaged her mother in conversation that could not be interrupted until a flood of music filled the room and it was time for the first dance.

"I—I 'm very sorry, Miss Dryden," said he, "but—" Alice was gracefully gathering up the folds of her gown with her pretty face averted and seemed to hear not a word. "I was about to explain," said Douglas and his knees were growing weak, but sweet Alice merely extended her beautiful arm and approached to be taken. There was no escape.

"Is t—that a t—two-step or—a—a—polka?" he gasped as he tried to place himself exactly according to Rudolph's instruction in the dancing-class.

"Two-step," said Alice smiling, "and a perfectly fine one. Squad, attention! Forward, March!"

How his feet ever obeyed the order Douglas never knew, but to his utter astonishment he found himself moving about that awful, slippery floor and counting desperately as he went. It was hard, hard work, harder than roller skates, harder than foot-ball, but he toiled on manfully and counted like a hero.

"One, two; one, two; one, two;" Alice listened to the labored half-tone mingled with interjections as Douglas collided with the other dancers, and never in her life did she enjoy a dance so much.

"Oh, that was fine fun," she said as the music ceased. Douglas heaved a sigh of relief, and looked into her sparkling brown eyes, wondering how she could say it.

"I 'll find your next partner, Miss Dryden," he panted as he led her to a seat within safe dis-

tance of her mother, and then turned away. In a moment he was back with Karl Krumms whose eyes literally opened with delight as he approached "the prettiest girl at the hop." Then Douglas escaped from the room and paced the side balcony in the dark, while he waited for the next dance. Rory had assured him that he would look out for the comfort of Mrs. Dryden during his absence and Douglas was duly grateful for the service.

When he returned to the door of the ball-room to report faithfully for the eighth dance, Miss Alice was the center of a group of admiring cadets among whom were Swayne, Rory and Karl Krumms. "Oh, Mr. Atwell, Mr. Atwell," said she enthusiastically, "they tell me that you won your cadetship by conspicuous gallantry in the campaign in the Philippines—that you have really and actually fought upon the battle-field." She paused with her big brown eyes full of admiration and wonder, while Douglas blushed until he thought his face would burst into flame.

"Is it true?" she demanded.

"I served through the campaign," said he evasively, "but it was a small affair you know."

"Rory has told me enough to assure me that you are a perfect hero, and I must hear the whole story from your own lips. Come down stairs to a quiet corner in the hall. I 'm going to make you tell me the whole thrilling experience. Rory says you are the bravest man in the army."

Douglas followed her lithe figure as she stepped through the door—he could do nothing else, and in a moment they were seated in the lower hall adjacent to the great bronze doors at the entrance. With kindling cheeks she waited for him to begin and Douglas felt assured that her interest was genuine.

Surrounded by tablets and busts which commemorated the deeds of valor of West Point's heroic dead, he therefore related that chapter of his life which Miss Dryden requested to hear—his capture by a bandit chief, his narrow escape from assassination in the insurgent camp, and his night ride to capture in turn the man who had condemned him to death.

The moments sped by and as Douglas talked his embarrassment vanished and he was back again his natural self in the khaki-clad ranks of the fighting men, and for the first time in his life

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he felt a pleasure in re-living the tragic scenes of his life in the Philippines.

The music had just begun for the second dance when a sound came to his ears that made him pause. An instant later, Miss Dryden stood beside him as he swung open the bronze door of the vestibule revealing Sam Smoke and the "civilian," and once more the latter was threatening in a loud tone, while the former was pleading as if for his life.

Douglas seized the man by the collar and flung him against the wall with such violence that he gasped for breath.


"My heavens, it 's Atwell," said he as he cast one terrified glance at Douglas and then fled through the open door into the darkness, while Sam Smoke staggered up against a bronze tablet and buried his face in his trembling hands.

"Miss Dryden," said Douglas with a sudden resumption of his instinct of leadership, "you will please say nothing to any one of this incident to-night."

And Miss Alice bowed her dainty head submissively to a command which she felt she dare not disobey.

CHAPTER XVI

A NIGHT ON THE HUDSON

“ORY,” said Douglas two weeks later, “I think I ought to tell you about the peculiar conduct of Sam Smoke. The thing has been getting on my nerves, and I find myself thinking about Sam when I ought to be fighting for tenths to save me from being found deficient. The more I try to account for his behavior the more confused I become. I’m stupid about those things, just as I ’m stupid about many others, while you are quick to see beneath the surface and discover the motives which impel people.

“You ’ve never told me why Hardin’s explanation justified my fight with him in camp, and though I could feel that you were right, I could see absolutely nothing wrong in Bill’s phraseology. This case of Smoke is of exactly the same kind. I have a feeling that there is something seriously wrong but I can’t get any further.”

"Well," said Rory with growing interest, "let 's have a statement of the case and then we will compare notes on impressions. But just a moment, Dug., old boy, I 'll shave while you talk, and by the time we have Sam's epitaph agreed upon, I 'll be ready for the hop."

Rory set to work at once on his Reppenhagen and Douglas stood beside him and related the story of Sam Smoke's affair with the disreputable civilian whom he had caught in barracks and at the door of Cullom Hall.

Rory's razor strokes grew slower and slower as he listened and finally ceased entirely as he gazed at his room-mate and eagerly swallowed every word of the narrative.

"How did the fellow act?" said he at last. "Like one begging a favor or demanding a concession?"

"His manner was decidedly threatening," answered Douglas. "And besides his threats have weight; he has Sam in a state of absolute panic. I took him for a drunken intruder who had slipped into barracks when I found him in Sam's room, but when I suggested marching the fellow down to the guard-house as a prisoner, Sam implored me to let him go."

"I did n't pay much attention to the affair then, but this incident at the door of Cullom Hall has set me to thinking hard. I shall never forget the look of anguish in Sam's face when he turned about and saw me. A feeling came over me that his embarrassment and suffering were partly due to the fact that I was the man who witnessed the scene. The natural antipathy that has existed between us ever since the early days of our plebdom, did not seem sufficient to account for his conduct. There was only one way of relieving my mind, that of telling you about it and asking for an opinion."

Rory stood still with his razor poised in air, the lather dry on his face and his eyes sparkling with excitement. He was on the point of expressing his convictions in plain and forcible terms when he suddenly remembered that only two days remained before the examination on which Douglas' fate depended and he wisely refrained from any exciting disclosures.

"Hard to give an opinion on such incomplete data," said he cautiously as he picked up his brush and resumed work. "If we did n't have Sam's history on our minds the thing might pass with little notice, but——well, we might just

let matters stand as they are and if you ever clap eyes on that disreputable cit again lay hold of him with life and shout for me. I would like to have a heart to heart talk with him. But don't worry about it, Dug.—Sam 's a chicken-hearted blusterer and almost any one could frighten him into a panic."

Rory watched his room-mate carefully as the latter turned away apparently much relieved and sat down at the table in front of his pile of books.

It was Saturday night once more, two weeks after that celebrated hop at which Douglas had made his first appearance as a dancer, and the first half of the academic year had gone into history. Douglas had managed to hold his section but the last recitation left him deficient and only eight tenths ahead of Bill Hardin who still drove the goats to their daily slaughter. Every man in Bill's section was deficient and so were half the members of the section above. Only by passing such an excellent examination as would establish their fitness beyond the shadow of a doubt could these men hope to escape discharge from the Military Academy. On the following Monday morning the ordeal would begin, and having dismissed

Sam Smoke from his mind, Douglas was ready to enter upon the struggle which meant either life or death to his ambition.

In French and descriptive geometry, especially the latter, he had done most satisfactory work, while in drawing he was easily among the leaders of the class; but analytical geometry was to him merely an absurd collection of meaningless formulae which the text declared represented the figures on the adjacent pages. Before him now lay this book with its hated diagrams staring him in the face and once more he attempted to settle down and struggle for mastery over them.

He had been at work only about five minutes and the mellow notes of "call to quarters" were pealing through the room, when the door swung open and Bobby MacGregor stood on the threshold.

"Oh mon, mon!" said he with a broad Scotch accent as he rolled his eyes tragically and limped up to the table, "the wee Military Academy is ruined at last," and then Bobby unfolded one of the yellow evening journals and spread it upon the table.

Across the top of the paper in glaring head-

lines was the announcement that Congress had taken up the subject of hazing at the Military Academy, and if necessary to eradicate the evil, this worthless institution would be leveled to the dust and the grounds sold for the benefit of a long suffering public. "The corps is to be disbanded," said Bobby ruefully, "and our place is to be taken by a well-ordered menagerie. Well, I wish them success, but in the language of a distinguished graduate I would like to remind the writer of that article that there is only one man in history who ever attempted to sell West Point and his name is Benedict Arnold."

In spite of the glaring falseness of the newspaper head-lines, there was still a grain of truth in the announcement. For more than two weeks, hazing at the Military Academy had occupied some space in every journal of the country. The old trouble had broken out afresh, and throughout barracks only one subject was discussed—the hazing incidents of the preceding camp and the morality of the practice. In spite of the assertion of some disgruntled yearlings that the attitude of the authorities would merely bring about the introduction of hazing into the barrack life of

the cadet, affairs had run along in the same old routine way and the plebes had been treated neither better nor worse than they had been for twenty-five years past. Like a bolt from a clear sky the subject had been brought before the public gaze once more by the announcement in a local paper that a young man, formerly a cadet, had died at his home as the result of the hazing he had suffered at West Point.

This accusation was referred to the War Department and an investigation had actually been ordered. From the very outset it was clear that the charge was false and groundless, but the hysterical public had run short of sensations and needed either a hero to applaud or a victim to buffet.

The effect upon the Military Academy was to bring up the whole subject of hazing for discussion once more and to re-form the lines which had gradually disappeared under the influence of barrack life.

"The whole matter will come to a crisis," said Douglas thoughtfully, "and if cadets feel now as they did in camp, the investigation will disclose a volcano."

"Well," replied Bobby with a twinkle in his eye as he backed away toward the door, "it 's a source of great gratification to me that I never hazed a helpless plebe nor accepted a moment's service from a lusty son of toil. Odd's blood, not I, sir."

"Going to the hop, Rory?" he added carelessly as he paused on the threshold, and then he nodded significantly toward his own room across the hall which Swayne had just entered. "Swayne is n't," said he, "got a telegram that Miss Dryden could not come and he fell out from all the rest of the dances and has been as ugly as a mortal sin all the afternoon."

Douglas made a gallant effort to see only the figure in analytical geometry in front of him, but nothing could restrain the hot flush that swept over his face at Bobby MacGregor's announcement. He was glad when Bobby went to his room, gladder still when Rory left for the hop thus permitting him to rise and pace the floor with his book in hand hoping to conquer his abstractions by combining both physical and mental labor; but try as he would, the events of the past demanded place in his mind, and among these

memories, none returned more persistently than that of the night in Cullom Hall when he sat with Miss Dryden and recounted the incidents of the campaign in the Philippines.

He paused at the window and gazed out upon the cloudless, starlit sky. How beautiful it seemed, how peaceful and mysterious. Standing out in the infinite space were the same twinkling worlds that swept across the sky night after night when he lay among the bamboo and nipa and heard the savage shriek of a hostile bullet. And Miss Alice Dryden had demanded a recital of his history, and listened like a child with her beautiful lips parted in wonder, her great brown eyes wide open and startled, and had begged him to tell her more at their next meeting.

"The next meeting!" he said half aloud as he gripped the book between his fingers. "By Monday night the Department of Mathematics may have declared me unfit to meet any one as a cadet of the Military Academy. My name may have been stricken from the roll."

The thought made him turn pale with horror, and he sat down sobered and ready for work. An hour passed and he still pursued the theme

with unfaltering zeal, and for the first time during the course, the light began to shine through the mist and he began to see. It was 9:30 p. m. and the drums were rattling off tattoo when the door softly opened and Swayne interrupted his labors.

The latter held a telegram in his hand and his face bore the look of one laboring under a great strain of suppressed excitement.

"Douglas," said he, "Miss Dryden wires me that she and her father and my sister will be on the train that passes through Garrison at 10:30 to-night. I want to row across the River to see them but I can't manage the boat alone. Will you go with me?"

For a moment Douglas thought that Swayne had lost his mind, but his unfaltering manner, and earnest gaze soon assured him that the gallant little first sergeant was never more fully in the possession of his mental faculties. Swayne had resolved to do a reckless thing and with characteristic promptness he came to the point.

"I know that I am asking a great deal but if I did not stand ready to do as much for you I would not ask it at all. You are the only man in

the corps whom I would approach on this subject. There 's a chance of discovery and punishment, but if we are caught I will assume all responsibility."

"Does your sister know that you are coming?"

"No. She would not approve at all. I telegraphed Miss Dryden that I would be there and asked her to get out of the train with sister and let me give them a surprise."

Swayne flushed and Douglas felt his own temples throb. This then was the situation. Swayne, the excellent dancer, the social favorite of the post, had enjoyed Miss Dryden's company while Douglas was pacing the back porch and yearning to escape. Again he had met her at an afternoon tea, and now he was standing before Douglas and asking him to take a fearful risk in order to bring about another meeting—for ten minutes.

Under other circumstances Douglas could have declined coöperation with perfect equanimity, but somehow he felt that to do so in this case would be contemptible.

"When do you start?" said he.

"Immediately after taps."

"All right," replied Douglas without the slightest show of hesitation, "I will be ready."

"Good boy," said Swayne as he patted Douglas upon the back, "you 're worth your weight in gold. I arranged for a boat with one of the engineer soldiers and we will find it at the dock near the railroad station. I will wait for you on the landing at five minutes after taps."

Swayne stepped back into his room and the sentinel of the third relief rushed upstairs on his tour of inspection. A few minutes later the relief marched off post and Douglas had time to think of what he was going to do. Almost on the eve of an examination which must decide his career he was preparing to commit an offense which might turn him out of the Academy. Why? He passed his hand across his forehead and asked himself the same question. Oh, yes, yes, the river was filled with pieces of floating ice and fear for Swayne's safety impelled him to go. He leaped at the excuse and pressed all other thoughts back into the hidden recesses of his brain.

To conform completely to the regulations, he was undressed and in bed when Swayne himself made the inspection at taps, and five minutes later

he and Douglas were wrapped in their long gray overcoats and were tip-toeing downstairs.

Through the north sally-port and along the front of barracks they passed and then stole between the chapel and the administrative building and began the descent of the hill. This was the first flagrant breach of regulations for each, but neither was thinking of the enormity of his sins.

A train, brilliantly lighted, thundered out of the West Shore tunnel as they reached the bottom of the hill and with a reverberating shriek swept on past the railroad station and out of sight along the base of the overhanging bluff. It was carrying hundreds of souls to beloved friends who waited their coming in New York, and Douglas' eyes followed it with a yearning he could not define.

Was there any one waiting for him? No, he thought, he was no more to that vast universe in which he lived than the fragment of ice which the great river was bearing down to oblivion in the endless ocean. But with Swayne, how different! What a prize of life he could struggle for!

Without a word Douglas stepped into the boat,

unhooked the rope, and lay back upon the oars. Through the black, silent waters the boat shot out into the stream and together the two lads pulled away in silence. The clear moonlight lay like a sheet of molten silver on the surface of the river, enabling them to avoid the pieces of ice, and in a few moments they were approaching the boat landing at Garrison. Far up the Highlands the shriek of the train sounded through the gap and Douglas started from his reverie.

"She's coming," whispered Swayne as he laid heavily to the oars and drove the prow of the boat past the nose of the pier. A yellow glint of light along the face of the stream as the boat touched shore announced the arrival of the train at the great bend north of Cold Harbor, and Douglas ascended the incline to the railroad station with a feeling approaching panic.

"Swayne," said he, "I want to ask you a favor. Under no circumstances tell these folks that I am with you. My place will be here behind the railroad station until you return."

Swayne expostulated in vain, and when the great glaring engine came to a halt Douglas was well concealed within the protecting shadows of

the building. From his place of concealment, however, he eagerly watched the train for the appearance of that party for whom he had risked so much. Then right in front of him Charlotte Swayne, Alice Dryden and her father stepped down from the platform, "to look at old West Point," and he heard the exclamations of surprise and pleasure as Swayne stepped forward.

Miss Charlotte's resentment at the risk he had run was soon forgotten in the delight of seeing the brother she so much admired. For ten delightful moments the three stood together and Douglas could hear their low, merry laughter and catch a glimpse of Miss Dryden's face as she stood dimly revealed in the light from the car window. He tried to hear nothing of the conversation but nevertheless these words came to his ears like the sound of sweet music, "I am so sorry that you did not bring Mr. Atwell with you. I half hoped to see him."

Then the conductor's "All aboard," drowned the rest of the conversation, the little party exchanged good-bys and the train was gone. Douglas stepped out from the shadows and there

was a ring of happiness in his voice as he joined Swayne on the way back to the boat.

In a few moments the two lads had pulled clear of the shore and while they rowed they watched the trail of light as the train wound in and out along the sinuous course of the river. At last it flashed out of sight and Swayne rested on his oars in midstream.

"Douglas," said he, "that is the most remarkable girl I have ever met. She has been brought up in luxury and in the midst of society, and yet she is as natural and unaffected as a child."

And then in the strong forceful manner which was part of Swayne's natural makeup, he continued to relate his impressions of Miss Alice Dryden. A most willing listener, Douglas pulled away toward the prominence near Gee's Point at which they had agreed to land, and as he rowed he gradually forgot the bite of the wind and the sweep of the ice-strewn river. Stroke by stroke he drove the boat into the shadows of the overhanging bluff screening the moon from view and the little craft skimmed along in comparative darkness. They had arrived within a dozen strokes of the cove into which they were

to turn and Douglas was lost to all thought of danger, when out from the darkness came the sound of a crash, the boat rode obliquely upward on a huge piece of ice, rolled over on its side and dipped into the freezing water.

With a smothered cry Swayne disappeared beneath the boat and Douglas heard the frantic thrash of his arms as he struggled to escape its downward thrust. A second later Swayne's hands appeared above the surface and Douglas plunged forward and seized them in his firm grasp.

"Swim, Swayne, swim with all your might," he shouted as he drew the strangling lad's face above the surface, and Swayne responded with the energy of one who battles with death. It was not twenty feet to the jutting ledge of rocks that stood out near Gee's Point and toward this refuge Douglas swam with all the strength of his powerful limbs. Stroke for stroke Swayne struggled on by his side, but the current swept like a mill-race around this sharp prominence and in spite of all efforts he gained but little. The cold water ate in to the very marrow of his bones, gripped his heart and seemed to crush it.

Douglas turned toward Swayne and saw his face sinking below the surface while through the water came the horrible gurgle of a scream for help. Swayne was drowning.

The next instant he had gripped Douglas and the latter felt himself lose headway. It was now not more than ten feet to the rocks and safety, and with heart almost bursting with agony, Douglas plunged on. But his limbs had lost their power, his strokes ceased to propel him onward. Down, down he sank into the black water, while the events of a lifetime shot through his frenzied brain. Then his foot touched solid support and with all his strength he thrust himself upward, reaching, clutching until with a thrill of joy his hand closed upon something hard and round and he knew that he had reached the shore. With one fierce pull he drew his face above the water and with the free hand he reached down and dragged Swayne up the sloping surface. Too much exhausted to crawl farther his head sank upon the blessed thing that had saved him—the old ring drilled into the solid rocks by order of General Washington to form a point of support for a chain to be stretched across the river and thus

arrest the progress of Great Britain's hostile frigates.

With a prayer of gratitude trembling on his lips, Douglas staggered to his feet, hauled Swayne's unconscious body up the rocks and permitted the water to drain from his purple lips. Then calling up all his strength, he took the limp body upon his back as he had learned to do in the army, and clambered up the icy slopes of Flirtation Walk.

Free from the grip of the freezing water, the power returned to his quivering limbs and he stumbled on desperately toward his goal. His wet clothes began to freeze in the biting night wind, but he fought his way onward and upward until he sank exhausted at Cullom Hall.

His head throbbed with pain, his lungs seemed ready to burst, yet as he lay beside the man he had saved his mind ran back to the night he sat within that brilliantly lighted hall and told Miss Dryden of his life in the Philippines. Rising once more he struggled on with his helpless burden, on past the administration building, on past the mess hall and up the steps of the hospital and into the ward.

In a moment he had torn Swayne's clothes

from his body, placed him in bed, and felt the returning flutter of his pulse, and then he called an attendant.

"Maguire," said he, "Mr. Swayne has been nearly drowned. Take good care of him but say nothing about the case unless you are forced to. It might go hard with us both if we were required to tell how this thing happened."

"Very well, sor, very well," said Maguire with a knowing nod of the head. "Have no fears for me, sor." And Douglas knew that he could depend on that assurance, for Maguire had treated him for many foot-ball injuries and was ever loyal to a "gentleman of that type."

With a parting glance at Swayne's reviving face, Douglas stepped out of the door and started on a run for barracks. He had just entered the quadrangle when he saw a light flash in a room on the top floor of his subdivision and realized that Captain Barton was making an inspection. Leaping forward at top speed, he sprang up flight after flight and tip-toed into his room just as Captain Barton reached the head of the stairs. With one sweep he cast off his long overcoat and slipped into bed with his dripping clothes.

Face turned away from the door, he lay like a mouse as the Captain's lantern swept over his bed. Then the door softly closed and "Captain Jim" was heard crossing the hall to Swayne's room.

"That puts Swayne safe," mused Douglas as he hopped out of bed and piled his wet clothing on the heater, "for I will be able to state that he was in the hospital at the hour of inspection."

CHAPTER XVII

IN DEFENSE OF THE CLASS'S HONOR



THE January examination had passed into history, and Douglas Atwell was once more a member of the goat section. Nappy O'Mara, Benjamin Franklin Jones, J. Wheaton Wharton, and two members of the upper section had returned modestly to their homes convinced that Nature had chosen them for the less strenuous pursuits of peace. Bill Hardin had passed the examination as goat of the class, while Douglas ranked him only three files. Side by side they marched to their daily recitations and conducted a silent struggle for mastery.

Analytical and descriptive geometry had disappeared from the list of studies, but integral and differential calculus had taken their place and seemed to combine all the maddening difficulties of both.

As for Douglas, the subject required one ever-

lasting struggle against failure, and along the sides of his head the gray hairs were beginning to appear among the chestnut brown, mute testimonials of the price he paid for escape from disaster. The fact that he had been able to meet the emergencies of the past seemed the only reasonable guarantee that he would be able to acquit himself with honor in the coming June.

This constant threat of failure, however, was the least among his troubles at the present moment. After a bitter campaign conducted by Rory O'Connor, he had been re-elected class president, and he now found himself face to face with the problem which absorbed the whole attention of the corps. That notice in the yellow journal to which Bobby MacGregor had called his attention, contained a truthful statement indeed. A board of distinguished army officers had been ordered by the War Department to investigate the charge that an ex-cadet had died as the result of the hazing he had suffered at West Point. After a careful examination, not only of the cadets who were cognizant of the facts but of all others whose opinion was deemed important, the board had found that the charge was false, but the facts re-

vealed at that investigation aroused the most adverse criticism of the entire country on the subject of hazing.

Not satisfied with the results of the investigation, Congress appointed a committee to make a searching enquiry into the subject and to render a report, and for weeks this congressional committee sat in open session at West Point, calling before it nearly half the members of the corps.

"I was before the committee for five hours," said Douglas, "and never in my life was I subjected to such a fusillade of questions. A recitation in the goat section is merciful by comparison. I was forced to relate all the incidents of my fight with Hadley and the later one with Hardin and every motive was questioned and made to look reprehensible in the extreme. Fortunately I was able to prove by the case of Mr. Hart that plebes are not always called out for offenses against upper classmen, but this one poor case seemed lonesome beside the six others in which the offending plebe was soundly thrashed.

"I was president of the class which permitted this to occur, and probably in the report of that committee my record will look like that of a young

Nero gaily smiling on the torture of his victims. Well, I hope I stood the ordeal without a show of temper, but there were times when I felt bursting with indignation. That won't affect my determination to do my duty, however, so we will hold a class-meeting to-night to discuss the resolution to abolish hazing forever."

And that night the meeting was held. It was a stormy affair in which opinions were expressed with the utmost freedom and such opposition was developed against the resolution as to indicate its probable ultimate rejection.

"That resolution," said Abraham, "is practically the work of one man—Swayne—and it's the same old thing he was trying to force on his class the night Smoke undertook to 'get square.' I was opposed to it then, I never agreed to it at all, and I decline to be bound by a provision which is certain to ruin the discipline of the corps." And this sentiment, expressed after an appeal by Douglas to adopt the resolution in every detail, was roundly applauded by the same men who so nearly approved of the proposed fight between Smoke and Mr. Hart during the past encampment.

"Yes, it 's the same old feud," said Douglas after the meeting adjourned. "The class is split almost squarely in half, and Bill Hardin and Sam Smoke are leading the insurgents. That ragged civilian who had Sam on the verge of hysteria that night in Cullom Hall has completely disappeared. Sam has taken a new lease of life and sees a chance of jumping into popular favor by espousing the cause of the rebels. He and Bill are holding meetings every night in barracks and preaching insurrection like professional agitators. Should they force things to a crisis I wager anything that they sneak out of danger and let some one else bear the consequences.

"Sam amounts to nothing personally, but Bill is as fearless and dangerous as a grizzly, and, moreover, he has the qualities of a leader. He 's the man to be conciliated, but I can't approach him; we have never spoken except officially since the morning we had our fight."

Douglas looked beseechingly at Rory, but the latter could suggest nothing. The methods and customs which had prevailed for a half century were being repudiated and every class was rent

with internal dissension. Moreover, the usual calming influence of the first class was gone, for the demands of the Spanish-American War and the insurrection in the Philippines had necessitated the graduation of that class in February. The second class had succeeded to the offices thus vacated and Swayne now commanded his company as cadet captain, and strove to repress all hostile sentiment with a zeal which threatened personal disaster. His attitude was bitterly resented especially by the yearlings. Class rivalry had become intense and a man was considered a traitor who did not stick with his own.

Thus it was clear that Douglas must sacrifice some ideals or resign the leadership to the insurgents. In private he conferred with Swayne and strove to harmonize the action of the two classes, but this must be accomplished without the outward appearances of coöperation. It was possible, however, to meet daily and their affection for each other grew at each successive meeting.

Ever since that night in December when Douglas dragged Swayne's body from the death-grip of the Hudson, these two young men had been

bound together by an affection akin to that which is born on battle-fields. Not a person except themselves knew of the events of that tragic night, and Douglas felt bound to reveal them to no one. A half hour after Swayne's arrival at the hospital, Maguire had called back consciousness to his quivering body and after a night of faithful service he had restored his patient to normal conditions at reveille. Swayne was returned to duty the next day apparently as well as ever and his sudden disappearance from barracks was credited to another case of "taken sick at night." In the privacy of his room he met Douglas and poured out his gratitude in fervent words which the lad would treasure all the rest of his life.

Thereafter, a day seldom passed without a visit from Swayne. It was delightful to have him drop in on a Saturday hop-night when barracks were still and practically empty and give full vent to his feelings. These interesting talks were never complete, however, without some reference to Miss Alice Dryden, who had been hurried off on a "tour" by her startled mother as soon as she heard of the Garrison episode, and hops had,

therefore, lost interest to Swayne until her return.

Thus the days passed. In spite of all opposition, Swayne's resolution in slightly altered form was adopted by every class, and the corps settled down to sullen compliance.

This was the situation on a bright afternoon in March when Douglas and Rory, arrayed in riding suits, walked down into the area of barracks. With the peal of the bugle the groups straightened out into two solid ranks and a moment later a section of the yearling class was marching away to the riding-hall. Beginning in the early autumn, the class had begun to alternate in attendance at instruction in riding and drawing, and it was Douglas's day for the former.

Down the winding path the detachment marched, filed into the hall, and halted in front of the line of restless, snorting, cavalry horses whose dispositions had been ruined by successive generations of green yearlings. There was not a shaggy brute in the whole line that did not seem to live for the mere joy of flinging untrained yearlings into the tanbark. No choice as to mount, at the command "Stand to horse,"

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each cadet faced about and took the bridle of the beast that happened to stand behind him.

"Prepare to mount!" Alternate numbers led their horses forward, and with hands on mane and withers waited the next command.

"Mount!" Up shot the nimble lads upon the bare shining backs and the section was re-formed.

On the first day's instruction, the class found the horses neatly saddled; on the second, the saddles were gone; on the third, the blanket too had disappeared never to return until the beautiful days of spring permitted long rides in the saddle upon the mountain roads.

Fortune had favored Douglas on this day and he found himself riding in column on one of the best mounts in the troop.

"Trot, March!" Around the hall the column started and the trouble at once began. Rory was just in front of Douglas frantically endeavoring to keep his seat on "Barnyard," the veteran of the stable.

"Old Barny" had grown so used to jolting out the teeth of cadets that the business had ceased to amuse him, but Douglas was a comparative recruit and the spectacle of Rory bobbing about

like a cork in a whirlpool filled him with compassion and mirth. For ten terrible minutes Rory clung tooth and nail, and then the instructor formed the class in column of twos, and gave the command, "Pass over your reins; fold your arms. Trot, March!"

Rory meekly handed his reins to Douglas and the column resumed its slow trot. Before coming to West Point Rory had not been astride a horse more than a half dozen times in his life, but he was now beginning to realize that those who succeed in the bareback school at West Point are not likely to fail in any other. With arms folded and not even a rein to lean upon, Rory was forced to depend for the security of his seat upon balance and the grip of his knees.

"Let the lower leg swing free, Mr. O'Connor," commanded the instructor, "take your heels out of the horse's side, let go of the mane, sir. That 's it, now hold up your head, carry your shoulders back, and avoid the appearance of constraint."

But it was perfectly clear to Roderick O'Connor and all who saw him that the future could hold no more perplexing problem for him than

that of obeying these instructions in a dignified manner on the back of this old derelict.

"From neck to croup he wriggled, while the gallery shrieked and giggled," wrote a contemporaneous "poet" in celebration of Rory's ride, and when for the twentieth time he was ordered to release his hold on the mane, Rory is reported to have explained that "he was just trying to hold up the horse—he was afraid that he might fall down and hurt himself." However, after five minutes of the most exhausting acrobatic work he had ever engaged in, Rory was flung headlong into the tanbark and old Barnyard plodded along over the course as though this was part of the regular programme of earning his oats.

Next came the exercise which Douglas liked so much—that of mounting and dismounting at the gallop. This was to be followed by the first try at the hurdles and the lad was full of spirits and eager for the work to begin. The class was formed in column of files and circled the hall at a slow trot, and at the command, "One trooper from rear to front," the last rider galloped forward on the inside of the column, and seizing the mane

sprang to the ground and in one leap regained his seat on the horse's back.

Douglas was the first to take the exercise and his excellent performance was the envy of the class. As if at work in the gymnasium, he sprang to the tanbark and rose to his seat four times in succession, each time accomplishing the feat with but one touch of his feet to the ground.

"Excellent, Mr. Atwell," said the instructor. "Next."

Rory pulled old Barney out from the rear of the column and started bumping for the front. "Dismount and mount," commanded the instructor, and as Rory slid from his seat, Barney sprang sideways, snapped Rory out to a horizontal position, and dropped him flat on his face. Then the old veteran trotted out to the center of the hall and lay down for a comfortable roll. As soon as Rory had recaptured his steed, the work was resumed. One by one the riders galloped forward, each striving to do his best, and then came Karl Krumms mounted on Harrington.

Long and slender of body, light of limb and deft of heel, the black demon leaped along the in-

side of the circle, his vicious eye scanning the line for an opportunity to land a blow. Down sprang Karl and as he rose the second time, up shot Harrington's heels and Douglas was hit.

So dexterously had the lithe brute delivered the blow that he never even broke his gait as he swept on to the head of the column, while Douglas rolled to the tanbark with a groan. The instructor was beside him in an instant, and in spite of his assurance that he was not hurt at all, the former ordered a litter and directed that he be carried to the hospital.

A half hour after his arrival, however, Douglas felt as well as ever and was eager to return to duty, but the surgeon ordered that he should remain in the hospital until the next morning.

Thus it happened that drill call sounded that afternoon, and for the first time in his career as a cadet, Douglas was not in ranks. Absence due to injuries in the riding-hall was such a common occurrence, however, that only routine notice of the fact was taken at the roll call, and few knew of the accident. Yet his absence from ranks this afternoon was responsible for one of the most regrettable incidents of Douglas Atwell's life.

As already noted, the corps had bound itself by a solemn promise to refrain from hazing fourth classmen and Swayne was determined to exact explicit obedience to this promise. Therefore when he walked between barracks and the gymnasium on return from drill and found Walker of the yearling class hazing a candidate, he turned upon the yearling sharply and demanded that he should stop.

"The corps has made a promise," said he severely, "and you are in honor bound to obey it. If you speak to that man again I will report you."

Whereupon Walker bitterly resented the language used to him and justified his conduct on the ground that the resolution covered fourth classmen, not candidates, and that he would be bound by not one bit more than the resolution demanded.

"I despise the resolution and the man who wrote it," declared Walker, as the angry tears glistened in his eyes, and Swayne peremptorily ordered him to leave the candidate while he himself went straight to the office of the officer in charge. From the front porch Walker saw him report and then he dashed upstairs and told his

room-mate that Swayne had reported him for hazing a candidate.

A fierce fire had been smouldering beneath the thin official surface which the class had preserved through the long strain of investigation on a false charge, and just this little breath was necessary to fan it to a flame. From mouth to mouth ran the word—"Swayne has reported Walker for speaking to a candidate while the resolution merely referred to the hazing of plebes."

In five minutes the class was seething with excitement and boiling with indignation. To be abused by yellow journals, to be slandered and pilloried to make a political speech was bad enough, but to be betrayed by one of the fold was beyond endurance. Small pale-faced groups gathered on the sidewalk as each company formed for retreat that night and from flank to flank ran the instructions of Abraham: "A class-meeting tonight immediately after supper in Atwell's room."

Ignorant of all that had happened, Douglas left the hospital as the battalion broke ranks after supper, and a few moments later he was climbing the stairs to his room to get his books-

for study that night. As he reached the landing he noticed the lights blazing within and heard the sharp tones of some one addressing the class.

The speaker's voice was vibrating with anger and for a moment Douglas stopped in surprise and listened. It was Bill Hardin and the very air seemed strained as he talked. He had been a witness to the whole affair between Swayne and Walker, and Abraham had called upon him to tell the class exactly what had happened.

Almost unnoticed Douglas pushed the door slightly open, stepped inside, and stood behind the eager lines that hung so closely to Hardin's words. With nails biting into the palms of his hands Douglas listened and grew pale. Never had he heard a more vehement arraignment, never one listened to with such complete response. It was the moment for which Hardin had worked and waited for many months and he was taking full advantage of the opportunity.

"That man, Swayne, must be thrashed till he is not even able to apologize for the insults he has heaped upon this class," cried Bill as he pounded his fist savagely into his hand. "He is one of the greatest athletes in the corps, but we have one

who is greater. He is a fighter who is hard to beat, but we have one who will beat him to death. Gentlemen, I ask the class to name Atwell to punish this man as he deserves."

Douglas stood aghast as he heard the furious burst of applause that followed these words, and a dozen men were surrounding him in a second and slapping him on the back.

"Here he is, here he is, the little dandy," they shouted. "We can depend on him to defend the honor of the class against a dozen like Swayne. Three cheers for Atwell!"

Douglas felt the room revolving in a dizzy whirl as he was urged through the crowd and up to the chair on which Hardin had stood. All about him were the eager faces of his class-mates but what he saw was that handsome lad standing in the light of the railroad train at Garrison beside the girl he had risked so much to see; all he heard was the gurgling cry of one of the bravest fellows in the Academy as Swayne sank exhausted in the death struggle with the ice-strewn Hudson; all he felt was the touch of Swayne's hand as he expressed his gratitude in words that had burned their impression on Douglas Atwell's brain for all the rest of his mortal life.

And then he was stumbling on to the chair and the next moment he was facing the class. His heart seemed bursting. His whole being shouted disapproval of the class's demand, but in every pale face that looked up into his own one verdict was written if he failed "to defend the honor of the class": "Coward! Traitor!"

"Gentlemen," said he, "I accept your choice. I will fight Swayne."

A cheer filled the room and the class broke out into the hall and dashed downstairs, while Douglas sank into a chair like one stricken and helpless.

Hardin and Smoke had scored at last.

CHAPTER XVIII

DOUGLAS FIGHTS SWAYNE



DOUGLAS had no sooner announced his willingness to fight Swayne than Hardin took it upon himself to rush across the hall and inform the latter that the class had selected a man to settle with him for his treatment of Walker.

"Very well," said Swayne coolly, "I 'll meet your man to-morrow immediately after inspection." And Hardin came back with an air of gratified malice and announced that Swayne had set the date and hour.

Rory entered a strenuous protest, for Douglas had been carried to the hospital from the riding-hall that afternoon, but the plucky fellow would listen to no demurring.

"I did not ask Hardin to honor me with his services as second," said he coldly, "but the thing is done. We can't get the fight over too quickly. The kick I received in the riding-hall to-day is

of no consequence, for Harrington misjudged his distance a trifle and landed only lightly. I will return to duty to-morrow morning and will be ready at the appointed hour to meet Swayne."

Accordingly when the gray battalion marched in from inspection the next day, Douglas absent-mindedly placed his rifle in the gun-rack and turned to the alcove to dress for the fight. His standing in mathematics, his struggle for the week against deficiency, had no interest for him to-day: he did not even go to the Academic Building to inspect the record of his disasters, but rather faced his task like a laborer burdened down with grinding toil.

From the alcove hooks he pulled down the old suit of plebe gray with its faded blood-stains, the same old suit he wore in his fight with Hadley and later against Bill Hardin. In both these encounters, he fought to sustain a principle and every mark on that sleeveless jersey was like a "red badge of courage" won on the field of honor; but now he was being forced by the man he had defeated and whom he despised, to fight the gallant fellow whose life he had saved, whose conduct he approved and applauded.

Not until the fatal words had been spoken did Douglas realize the malicious intent of Hardin's speech. Then it was too late to decline—too late at least for a man of Douglas Atwell's disposition. For Swayne's sake he would willingly stand with his hands by his side and receive the blow which would finish the battle, but then the words of fifty class-mates rang through his ears, "Atwell, Atwell, we can depend on him to defend the honor of the class—three cheers for Atwell!" and he realized that the honor of the class demanded that he should not wilfully suffer defeat. No, no, he could not be defeated, yet to avoid it, he must crush Swayne.

Douglas sat upon the edge of the bed and gazed blankly at the gruesome paraphernalia of the fight while every fiber within him vibrated with resentment of the thing he was about to do.

"Well, Douglas?" said Rory enquiringly as he stepped into the alcove, and the distracted lad gathered up his effects and left the room.

Together they crossed the area of barracks and turned into the ninth division, where they were joined by Karl Krumms, as silent and abstracted as either of them.

There was a vacant room on the top floor vacated by a plebe who had bidden adieu to his military ambitions in the preceding January, and here the affair was to take place. Two iron bunks which stood in the alcoves, a dusty washstand and a clothes-press were the only articles in the room when the party entered.

Douglas flung his clothes upon one of the bunks and sat down with his face turned away from the door to await the arrival of his opponent. A moment later Swayne entered with his seconds, the timekeeper and referee, but Douglas did not even look up. Eyes fixed upon the floor he grimly waited for the call of time, while the officials quietly arranged the preliminaries. There had been periods in the campaign in the Philippines when a feeling of nausea swept over him as he lay in the sweltering rice fields and waited for the call of the bugle to move forward to the attack; but never in all his life did such a sensation possess him as now. Again and again he strove to rise and tell Swayne that he would not fight him, that he would die before he would strike a blow, and then his brain fairly whirled as he heard the call of time.

He stepped forward, his hands half-raised, and then he saw the pale face and set, grim lips of his antagonist. With muscles playing beneath his beautiful white skin, Swayne backed about the room, shifting and feinting, and Douglas half consciously followed him. How it happened Douglas never knew, but suddenly he saw the flash of an arm, felt a terrible shock, and saw the room sweep around him like the fleeting landscape from the window of a railroad train.

The world was topsy turvy; he was in the sea, in a boat, floating in the sky, whirling through endless space, and vainly struggling to right himself. Coherent thought came back like a flash from the darkness in front of an outpost, and with a shudder of terror he realized that the referee was counting him out.

"Four, five, six . . ." He, the defender of the honor of the class, was being defeated . . . defeated without a blow! The class had called upon him, had shouted his name . . . he could hear the words ringing in his ears like the cry of frenzied thousands who saw him sweep down the field in that great struggle against Annapolis. He must not be conquered . . . every muscle was straining to rise.



***HE STEPPED FORWARD, HIS
HANDS HALF RAISED***

"Seven, eight . . ." He was upon his knees, swaying, one foot upon the floor, his dizzy gaze fixed upon his antagonist.

"Nine . . ." He sprang to his feet and clinched Swayne in his powerful arms.

"Break, break!" commanded the referee, as he sprang forward and forced the two struggling lads apart, but before Swayne could raise his hands to strike, Douglas was upon him again, hugging, clinching, clinging, clinging as the drowning man clings to support—as Swayne clung to him that night in the Hudson. But all this was forgotten now. The man before him was no longer the lad whose life he had snatched from the jaws of death, but rather the man whom the class had called upon him to defeat.

"Break, break, break!" The room shook with the thrust of straining feet as the referee fought to release Swayne from that grip like steel.

Suddenly Douglas yielded to the pressure, sprang away, then closed again fighting like a tiger.

In possession once more of his eye and brain, he blocked, he feinted, he struck with lightning quickness and accuracy, but Swayne met him blow for blow. Truly Bill Hardin had spoken—

Douglas Atwell was the only man of his weight in the corps who could hope to defeat Swayne. And with every muscle straining to its limit Douglas was striving to accomplish this result. Close up to his antagonist he fought, and the spectators fairly gasped as they watched. They had seen Douglas battle before, but in no such hurricane style as this.

"Time!" Douglas turned to his corner his face streaming with blood. The first round had seen him bested—almost defeated, and in a frenzy of anxiety he waited for the timekeeper's call.

In one minute it came and the two lads sprang forward and met in the middle of the room. Again the fearful thrash of arms, the sickening thud of blows, and the strained gasp for breath, resounded through the room. For a moment Swayne met each blow, faced each attack, but finally he gave way, slowly, inch by inch, keenly pressed each step by his more sturdy opponent.

When the round ended both were dripping with blood, cut, swollen and discolored almost beyond recognition. It was a horrible spectacle.

Three, four, five rounds passed, and the bruised and battered lads staggered about the blood

bespattered room and fought with all their remaining strength to win the decision. Swayne's eyes were practically closed; Douglas could see only by exerting all the power of his facial muscles to peer through the slit between his swollen lids. Sick, reeling, mad with pain, he rallied desperately and struck out with might and main. For a second he scarcely knew what had happened and then he heard the referee's voice, "One, two, three . . ." and with chin drooping on his chest, he staggered back against the wall, while Swayne lay writhing on the floor unable to rise. The gallant little fellow was out at last.

"I award the fight to Mr. Atwell," said the referee, and Douglas sank upon the bunk in his corner and strove to choke back the tears and repress the anguish that swelled in his heart.

With gentle touch Karl and Rory washed the blood from his face, and a few moments later they led him downstairs and across the area of barracks toward the hospital, and Walker, who awaited news of the battle, stood aghast as he saw the result of his acts. Atwell had won, but at what a terrible cost.

Only a hospital steward was on duty when

Douglas arrived, but a cot was soon secured and he was in bed with his face covered with bandages saturated with healing lotions, when Swayne was carried in on a litter and placed upon the next cot. Not a word was spoken as the same attendant bathed their wounded faces in turn and then applied the cloth steeped in a powerful solution which took away the pain.

The fearful struggle had sapped his strength and Douglas soon dropped off into a restful sleep. Only two other cadets occupied the ward in which the stricken combatants lay, and the place was quiet—almost deathlike. Under the influence of this unusual calm, Douglas slept on through the crash of the retreat gun, on through tattoo and taps, and awoke only when the tower clock was tolling off the hour of midnight.

Removing the half-dry bandages from his face, he opened his eyes as much as the swollen lids would permit and passed his hand over his distorted features.

As he did so, Swayne tossed back and forth upon his cot, moan after moan escaping his lips. Douglas rose upon his elbow and gazed with aching heart at the friend he had beaten down to

humiliation and defeat. Then he softly crept from his bed and removed the bandage from Swayne's face. The dim light that burned in the ward revealed a shocking sight. Swayne's face was swollen and distorted beyond recognition. The lids of his fearless blue eyes were almost sealed and a half dozen ugly marks upon his face outlined the cuts produced by the fearful blows he had received.

Douglas gazed at his work in horror. This, then, was the fruit of hazing and its false standards; this was the response he had made to the demand to sustain "the honor of the class." Cognizant only of the vainglorious fact that Douglas had won, many of his class-mates rejoiced in his victory that night, but over the body of his defeated antagonist Douglas vowed with all his heart that he would do everything in his power to wreck the standards that made such consequences possible.

With touch as gentle as a mother's, he placed new bandages across Swayne's face and sat beside him to renew the application as soon as needed. An hour had passed and Douglas was applying a new cloth when Swayne awoke and

aimlessly seized his hand like a child in sleep. For a moment he peered through the slits of his eyes like a near-sighted person, and then he sank back upon the bed with the muffled words, "Why did you fight me, Douglas?"

Douglas tried to speak, but his tongue would not respond. The emotion that had been surging through him rose in a tumult beyond his control and he lay back upon his bed and sobbed like a broken-hearted child.

That burst of tears relieved his mind and opened his heart, and as soon as he had regained his composure, he told Swayne the story of the class-meeting, of Hardin's speech, and the clamor of the class for his services.

"I could n't refuse them, Swayne," said Douglas. "I could n't let them think me a coward, and nobody but you and I knew what had happened that night on the Hudson. Class prejudice on the subject of hazing had been wounded and I could n't resist the clamor, no matter how I tried."

"Well, it 's all right, Douglas," said Swayne. "I would have done exactly the same as you did. Had the class waited till retreat, however, they

would have found that I did not report Walker at all. I was called to the office of the officer in charge on other business."

Douglas paused in astonishment. He had supposed that the report had been investigated and verified before a single step had been taken, but now he saw that Hardin and Smoke had acted without authority and apparently in accordance with well-laid plans. They had scored indeed.

For an hour the victor and vanquished talked together like wounded comrades on the battle-field, exchanging impressions and laying plans for the future, and then with a warm hand-clasp they mutually pledged true faith and friendship and lay down for the remainder of the night.

Several days passed in the hospital before either could attend recitations and on the evening of the seventh day Douglas left the ward to visit his room and secure some books and papers. His face was still black and swollen, and he was grateful for the concealment afforded by the dusk that had already settled over barracks. No one recognized him as he crossed the area and he was in hopes of escaping observation until he mounted to the third floor and turned to-

ward his room, and then he discovered that another meeting was taking place within.

For a moment he hesitated, and then he flung open the door and stepped inside. A great burst of applause greeted his entrance, but Douglas paid no heed and walked straight up to Rory O'Connor.

"What's this meeting for?" he asked sharply.

"Hardin asked for the meeting, and he is explaining the reasons for it now," replied Rory.

Douglas glanced up at the big, sullen-faced yearling, nodded his assent, and Hardin proceeded.

"The other day," said he, "one of our classmates had the temerity to accost a candidate and was reproved in such ungentlemanly terms that a fight was the result. Thanks to Mr. Atwell, the offense was properly punished. To-night a cadet officer was reduced to ranks because he required a plebe to assume a military bearing in ranks, and yet the corps agreed only to refrain from hazing plebes. Gentlemen, this calls for some expression of class sentiment. That the cadet officer was roundly cheered to-night after retreat was some satisfaction, but I asked for a

meeting of the class to-night to suggest some method of expressing the resentment of the class in case the agreement about hazing is again ignored."

Douglas was alert and waiting. A glance about the class showed that many heard this speech with consternation, some with indifference, and a few with positive approval. The moment was favorable for turning the tide and submerging the wreckers, and Douglas faced Hardin with the inquiry, "May I express my opinion on that subject?"

"Certainly," said Bill as he stepped down from his chair.

Douglas mounted in his place and turned to the class. His face still bore the marks of the punishment he had received in his fight with Swayne, but fiery earnestness radiated from every feature.

"Gentlemen," said he, "it has been my good fortune to have served in the army, and I am, therefore, qualified to say that the spirit of this meeting is little short of mutinous. To meet and arrange by concert of action for an expression of disapproval of a superior officer's conduct is

to foment mutiny, and no man who consents to it is faithful to his uniform. I tell you candidly that this meeting and the language expressed by Mr. Hardin meet with my unqualified disapproval. He was kind enough to refer to my defeat of Mr. Swayne, but permit me to say that I regret nothing so much in all my life as the fact that I ever fought him. I did so because the class would have thought me a coward if I refused, but Swayne was right and I was wrong, and so was this class.

"This class has steered a perilous course from the very beginning, and as I have responded to all demands in the past, I now propose to speak my mind.

"Gentlemen, you came to this academy of your own free will, and you may leave it as freely as you came. You swore to obey the orders of your superior officers and to-night you listen with equanimity to a proposal for a mutinous demonstration, and why? Because the illegal practices that have grown up in the last twenty years are being suppressed by the very authorities whose commands you are bound to obey under pledge of your sacred oath. If you disagree, annul your

contract and go out into the world and let your places be filled by men who realize the obligation of obedience to orders. I can understand that you are impelled by a sense of righteousness, that you believe hazing to be necessary for developing that fine physique, that excellence of drill and discipline for which the academy is famous, but listen—you propose to sustain your view by a show of mutiny. Such results illustrate the madness of the course this class has been following, and sooner or later the crash will come.

“I speak without regard to whom I hurt, for I have been the victim of your standards. You called upon me to sustain the honor of the class and fight Swayne for reporting Walker to the officer in charge. Walker should have been reported, but Swayne did not report him. You did not know it at the time, but that has no bearing on the case; neither did you know what I am now authorized to state, namely, that you called upon me to fight the best friend I have ever known, a man whose life I saved at the risk of my own under circumstances which I cannot reveal; you called upon me to punish him for doing his manifest duty when in my own mind I admired

him for doing it. In response to that call, which I did not have the courage to resist, I went into a room and beat Swayne down to unconsciousness and left his face an unrecognizable mass of cuts and bruises.

"This is the logical consequence of advice such as that to which you have been willing to listen to-night. It is not the first time that friend has been called upon to fight friend and the system which sanctions such strife is wrong and detestable.

"Let it be understood from this moment forward that I oppose such standards with all the resentment of my heart. I'm an enemy of every man who opposes the command to cease hazing in all its forms. I decline to give even the color of sanction to the 'demonstration' proposed to-night, and I hereby tender my resignation as president of this class."

Douglas stepped down from his chair and started for the door, while a great burst of applause indicated that a majority of the class had awakened to a sense of responsibility; but out from a remote corner of the room in which Sam Smoke was standing, came something very like a hiss, a sound which was smothered in its in-

iciency, however, by the clutch of a hand that closed upon his lips.

A number of friends attempted to delay Douglas, but he pushed vigorously through the crowded room, out through the door and dashed downstairs. Call to quarters was sounding, the area was filled with cadets, and eager to evade them, Douglas hurried through the north sallyport and turned to pass along the front of barracks. He had not advanced ten paces when he found himself face to face with Bobby MacGregor, Charlotte Swayne and Alice Dryden.

"Why, Mr. Atwell," said the latter, as she stepped forward and extended her hand, "what has happened to your face?"

"I—I 've been fighting," answered Douglas, and his heart quaked within him.

"With whom were you fighting, Mr. Atwell?" demanded the girl, and her tone was that of one who could not be denied an answer. It would be foolish and cowardly to evade the issue and Douglas replied with as much composure as possible. "I was fighting with Mr. Swayne."

The look of horror and anxiety which swept over Charlotte's face brought the blood surging to the very roots of Douglas Atwell's hair, and

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Miss Dryden stood gazing at him in surprise and indignation.

"Oh," she said coldly as she stepped back and took her friend's trembling hand, "how brutal."

Douglas raised his cap politely and left her without a word. Choking with anger, shame, and remorse, he rushed on around the corner of the Academic Building, and almost bumped into a civilian who was standing on the sidewalk.

"Pardon me," he said hurriedly as he glanced toward the man, and then halted in his tracks. The next instant he had the fellow by the collar and was shaking him about as a terrier shakes a rat.

Then he heard the patter of running feet and glanced over his shoulder to see Rory O'Connor running after him. He had left the room to soothe his angry spirit and assure him of the following of the best element of the class, but there was no time now for this.

"That 's the 'cit' I found in Sam Smoke's room," said Douglas as he flung the fellow at Rory, "take care of his case."

Then he turned and walked on to the hospital, the nails biting like knife-blades into the palms of his hands.

CHAPTER XIX

RETRIBUTION



HE councils of the insubordinate had prevailed, the storm so long threatened had broken at last, and the penitent corps was face to face with the consequences.

What actually happened that April night is matter of official record. Suffice it to say that after the publication of orders reducing a cadet officer to the ranks, the old academy was shocked by one of the most unfortunate episodes in its history. Disapproval of this official act was expressed in no uncertain terms, and conspicuous among the participants in this demonstration were some of the best men in the yearling class. Incited to an unnatural resentment by such men as Hardin and Smoke, they had taken the step which they would regret all the rest of their lives.

All this had happened while Douglas and

Swayne were still in the hospital, and now as the participants were called one after another before a board of officers for investigation, Douglas sat in his room and listened patiently to the grateful acknowledgments of those whom his now famous speech had saved.

True to his prediction, neither Hardin nor Smoke had taken active part in the demonstration. Having precipitated the catastrophe, they had not the courage to face the danger of punishment, and at the end of the first week of the investigation, it was apparent that neither would be seriously involved.

"But the day of retribution has come, nevertheless," said Douglas, as he paced his room and anxiously awaited the hour for action. The "cit" whom he had turned over to Rory that night of the last meeting of the class had furnished the evidence for which Rory had been searching for nearly a year and made the proceedings of a board of officers unnecessary in the case of Bill Hardin and Sam Smoke. Back behind the library, Rory had hauled the miserable informant and with threats of immediate arrest and prosecution he had forced the truth from his lips, and

nothing now remained but to bring the two guilty men face to face with the evidence against them.

With the plan of action fully understood and agreed upon, Douglas and Rory awaited the inspection of the sentinel of the first relief and then stepped out upon the landing where they were joined by Swayne and Bobby MacGregor, and the four cadets walked along the hall to the room in which Smoke and Hardin lived.

"I will wait for you below," whispered Rory as he bounded downstairs behind the sentinel, and Douglas nodded his assent.

"Come in," said Bill in response to the knock at the door, and the group entered.

"Smoke," said Douglas as the former stared wildly at him from behind his table, "we desire to hold a little private conference with you and Hardin, but if you have any objection to listening, we will take the matter to the commandant instead."

"I—I have n't any idea of what you m—mean," said Sam, but the sickly pallor that overspread his face betrayed the fact that he had a suspicion of the truth.

"Well, to be more explicit," answered Douglas,

"I will say that I ran into Jim Wefers the other night. He is the 'cit' I found in your room and later discovered at the entrance to Cullom Hall. Wefers tells a story which involves your honor as a cadet and gentleman, and similarly affects Hardin. If you would rather have me take the man to the commandant I will do so, but I thought it better for all concerned to settle this business in private."

Sam shuddered. "The man is lying," said he in a choking voice. "He is trying to blackmail me."

"Well," replied Douglas, "either you and Hardin will come downstairs to the sally-port and hear what this man has to say, or else I will take him over to the office at once."

"Oh, don't do that, don't do that," . . . whined Sam, but Hardin interrupted him with a gesture of impatience.

"Get your blouse on, Smoke," he growled, "and come on downstairs," and Sam rose trembling in every limb and obeyed.

A fearful storm was raging and the rain, driven by a fierce northeast gale, was beating furiously against the window-panes. No cadet

cared to leave the division in the face of this driving sheet, and the group therefore reached the area of barracks unnoticed. With long raincoats wrapped about them they dashed down the stone steps and into the sally-port.

"Well, here I am, boys," came Rory's voice from the darkness. "Wefers is on hand and ready to do business."

A jagged streak of lightning flashed across the sky, flooding the sally-port with its blinding light, and Douglas saw the miserable fellow from whose tattered garments the rain was pouring in streams. Behind him stood Rory and Karl Krumms as if on guard, and all was ready for the hearing.

"Wefers," said Douglas, "this committee wants you to tell your story in detail and give the men concerned a chance to defend themselves."

"They ain't got no defense," said Wefers, "for the game is up. I might as well say in startin' that I was in this job for the money, but I can't get no more, so I 'm ready to take off the lid. I 'll tell you how the whole thing happened.

"One night back in July last, I think it was, I was prowling around camp and came up near

the guard-tent. I saw Mr. Atwell in there—he was a corporal at that time. I knew him because I had seen him play foot-ball. Well, while I was standing near the trees, Mr. Smoke came up to me and says, ‘Say, would you like to earn a little money?’ Well, gentlemen that ’s what I have been after all my life and you can bet I was for the long green—if the thing was easy.

“‘What ’s the job?’ . . . says I.

“‘I want you to bring up a big bundle of straw from Highland Falls and get it inside of camp inside of an hour,’ says he. ‘You can slip across the sentinel’s post at the big tree on No. 3 close to No. 4, and then sneak into the boot-black’s tent near the ice water tank.’”

“I was back in time all right,” continued Wefers, “and got across No. 3 and into the tent. Mr. Smoke met me there and told me to stay where I was until he came back, and along about half-past ten he came flying in again with a night-gown in his hands and stuffed it with straw.”

“The man is lying,” gasped Sam.

“You ’ll have every chance to prove that,” replied Douglas sharply, “go ahead with your story, Wefers.”

"Well," continued the latter, "there was quite a lot of straw left, and Mr. Smoke filled a couple of pillow cases with it and skipped out. 'Stay right here,' says he, 'and don't stir, till I come back and let you out of camp. There 'll be some fire crackers goin' off in a minute and may be some shootin', but don't get scared; nobody will come this way.'

"Then he went away, and in about five minutes off goes the crackers, bang! bang! bang! and I heard the sentinel a-callin' at the top of his voice. I heard the whole rumpus it made in camp and thought it was a pretty slick joke. Of course I did n't know then what the straw was to be used for. Pretty soon I heard Mr. Atwell come down on the post with a detachment of the guard, and finally when things were gettin' quiet again off goes the reveille gun. That sturred 'em up for fair, and a few minutes afterward Mr. Smoke came running down to the tent and told me it was time to skip out, across No. 4 and said that he had fixed it all right with the sentinel.

"I did n't go right off because so many people were stirring in camp and when I did start to pull out, down came the sentinel on No. 4 and

challenged. I walked straight up to him and he turned his back and did n't see me cross. I heard some one coming, so I hid in the grass on the other side of the road, and Mr. Atwell came up and jumped the sentinel good and plenty for not stopping me."

"Who was the sentinel?" demanded Douglas.

"Mr. Hardin, sir," said Wefers promptly. "He 's a foot-ball player too. He was the man all right."

Another blinding flash of lightning lit up the sally-port revealing Sam Smoke leaning against the wall, pale-faced and miserable. His sins had overtaken him at last and his comrades instinctively drew away from him in disgust.

"I don't see any use in listening to this driveling fool any longer," said Hardin hotly. "I let him get out of camp when Smoke told me that it was all right for him, and you fellows may do as you like about it. I have no excuse to offer."

"You submitted an explanation of my report against you," said Douglas, "in which you stated officially that—"

"That no person entered camp across my post either with or without authority while I was on

guard," broke in Hardin, "and no one did enter camp—leaving camp is not entering it."

Douglas started as if struck. Never until this moment had he been able to discover the flaw in Hardin's explanation. The evasion was manifest to Rory that night when he unfolded the official document in his tent, and then decided that Douglas was justified in fighting the man who wrote it.

"You made a truthful statement, Hardin," said Rory, "but many falsehoods are as honorable as that kind of truth."

"That 's my business," replied Hardin savagely.

"But the corps is interested in your profession, don't you know," said Rory suggestively. "We will hear the rest of Wefers' story."

"There ain't much more to tell," said the latter. "I just thought that there was something crooked goin' on and in a few days I found out that I was on the right track. Since that time I lived pretty easy on Mr. Smoke's money, but he can't get any more, so the game 's up.

"Mr. Atwell caught me in Mr. Smoke's room one night when I followed him and threatened to

squeal if he did n't pay the price. He caught me again at the door of Cullom Hall, and I don't want to run into him no more. You fellows can have me arrested for blackmail if you want to, but I've given you the goods and done the square thing at last."

"Have you got anything to say, Smoke?" said Rory.

The latter muttered a negative and shrank deeper into the darkness.

"Then I think that is all, Wefers," concluded Rory. "I'm sorry I can't reward you for your services."

"Oh, I ain't lookin' for no rewards, now," answered Wefers. "I did n't catch on at first, but pretty soon I found out that they were trying to do up Mr. Atwell, so I decided to squeal. Even if he had n't caught me there at the Academic Building the other night, I would have come in with the stuff. That's all I got to say, gentlemen, good-night."

Wefers turned the thread-bare collar up around his neck and walked out into the blinding storm. A few minutes later, the group of silent cadets had returned to Smoke's room and the latter sat

on the edge of his bed with his pale face buried in his hands, while the investigation was resumed.

"You all heard what Wefers had to say," continued Rory as he took a seat at the table. "Now I can complete the story of that night in camp and clear up all doubts on the subject.

"Somehow Smoke discovered that I had run it out and he suddenly saw an opportunity of involving both myself and Atwell in a dishonorable affair. He left Wefers in the boot-black's tent, carried up that straw dummy and placed it in my bed so that the Tac. would find it there and believe me guilty of an attempt at deceit. He used Atwell's nightgown either to involve him or to complete the impression that the whole job had originated in that tent. To get rid of the excess straw, he filled one of Atwell's pillow cases and placed it beneath his tent floor, and then joined the group that was to haze Mr. Lumley on post.

"You all know how that affair came out. You remember that Atwell's pillow was found on the post, that I was caught out of camp, and that nearly every Tac. in the department believed me guilty of engineering the whole thing. They

thought that I had fired the reveille gun, too, and if it had not been for the stiff defense that Douglas put up in my behalf I believe that I would have been severely dealt with. I escaped with reduction to the ranks, while Sam Smoke was made Corporal in my place. He has been wearing those honorable marks of distinction ever since, but I do not envy him the pleasure. While holding down the dignity of his office, he had to keep that tell-tale bundle of straw beneath his virtuous feet all the rest of camp, but it was necessary to get rid of it finally, and he made the attempt the night before our return to barracks.

"You all remember that Captain Skinner captured my load of contraband that night at parade and some of us will also remember that the Captain's tent was looted during a 'diversion' and the contraband was carried off. Yes, we've enjoyed the good stuff all winter long, but after we had gotten away with the stuff we scattered and came back to camp, each on his own hook. I crossed the interior of Fort Clinton and ran straight on top of a little fire burning in the angle of the bastion.

"The man who was attending that honest little

blaze was a cadet. He was burning a bundle of straw stuffed in a pillow case and when I came up he shot over the parapet like a jack rabbit and got away from me. I picked up an unburned portion of the pillow case, however, and here it is."

Rory pulled out the fragment of cloth from the pocket of his blouse and Sam Smoke sank back on his bed and shrank from the accusing glance of the speaker, while the eager committee gathered about to examine the evidence of guilt.

"You see the side burned slowly," explained Rory, "because it was damp and dirty by long contact with the ground beneath the tent, and a portion of the owner's name is visible on the edge of the hem. The last letter of the name is 'l.'" Rory spread the piece of cloth on the table and drew from his pocket a sheet of paper on which Douglas had written his name. With a pair of scissors he cut off the last letter and then laid the paper on top of the fragment of cloth.

"It 's conclusive," exclaimed Swayne, as he sprang to his feet. "It was Atwell's pillow-case. But, steady, how do you know who was running that fire?"

"I did n't identify the man on the spot," re-

plied Rory, but I felt morally certain that I could name him, so the next day when the battalion marched back to barracks I asked Dug. to look out for the room and I went straight back to camp. The army service men had already raised the tent floors before my arrival, and there on the ground where Sam Smoke's old tent floor had stood, I found these pieces of straw."

Rory drew an envelope from his pocket and shook out its contents upon the table. "To clinch the matter, I went back into Fort Clinton and picked up some of the unburned bits of straw in the bastion, and you will see that they correspond exactly with these from beneath the tent floor. I had also kept a few pieces of straw from that dummy lad I found roosting in my bed, and the identity of all three removes the last shadow of doubt that Sam Smoke is the guilty man. I had to wait, however, until I could find out how the stuff got into camp, but to-night we heard the story of its delivery."

Rory sat back in his chair and the astonished listeners gazed blankly at each other in silence.

"I assure you that I had nothing to do with this straw business," said Hardin at last, as he

glanced angrily toward the limp figure of his room-mate, who lay with averted face upon the bed.

"There is nothing to show that Hardin was in any way concerned except in permitting Wefers to leave camp across his post and in putting in that misleading explanation," said Rory.

"Did n't all this occur the night that Mr. Hart was amanuensis on guard?" asked Karl Krumms after a moment's silence.

"Yes," answered Rory. "You remember that Smoke challenged the plebe for reporting him late in returning from camp, and that Douglas prevented the fight by casting the deciding vote at the class-meeting. Well, Wefers' story corresponds exactly with that of the plebe. Smoke reached camp at about half-past ten and was present until after the reveille gun was fired. Douglas saw him returning from camp and so did the plebe at 10:44 and yet he claimed that he had been back five minutes when he reported at the guard-tent at 10:45. We now not only know that this was false, but we also know the honorable business on which Sam was engaged during his absence.

"Until a few days ago," continued Rory, "I was at a loss to know how he managed to be absent all that time and not be called to account by the officer of the guard, but this letter from Jenkins, who was found¹ last January, clears up the whole thing. Jenkins was on guard that night and he tells the story in his usual rakish style. Yes, here 's the paragraph. Jenkins says:

" 'Perhaps you would like to know how we managed to fire the reveille gun that night you were caught out of camp. Well, old Bill Hardin, myself and Smoke fixed up the job, but I did the real business, and Hacker took good care not to see anything out of the way. He was not much on the military and I 'm half glad they found him too, but that 's neither here nor there with my story.

" 'I had been dragging off bread from the mess-hall for some time and when I got enough on hand I filled the powder bag with bread crumbs and carried off the real stuff. Then I worked a wire out to the gun and made fast to a primer. Smoke and some other fellows ran the hazing of Mr. Lumley on No. 3, and when all was ready I hauled in on my wire while everybody was standing right in front of the guard-tent. Boom! I had loaded the old gun with guard sandwiches and stuffed the ram-rod down on top, and I can see bread, ram-rod, and fire blazing through the trees yet.' . . .

¹ "Found."— Cadet slang for "found deficient" in studies, necessitating dismissal from the academy.

"Well," said Rory as he smiled and folded Jenkins' letter, "that was just a piece of plain tomfoolery, but the case of Hardin and Smoke is different. It now becomes our duty to tell these gentlemen how their conduct looks in the eyes of the corps."

Swayne was the first to speak. "We can settle the matter with them privately," said he, "or take it up to the commandant for his action. Personally I'm for reporting the whole affair at once. How do you stand on the subject, Atwell?"

Sam Smoke had pulled himself to his feet and stood like a man upon whom sentence of death was about to be pronounced.

"Don't report me, don't report me," he begged piteously. "I never meant to do so much injury, but I did put the dummy in the bed because of my dislike for Atwell and O'Connor. I've never spent a happy day since, and I'm ready to go. I'll fail in my studies in the June examination and after that you fellows need never see me again. I've suffered agonies already and I beg of you fellows that you won't let this thing get out against me."

He turned and fell face downward upon his bed, while his body shook with suppressed sobs.

"How about Hardin?" said Swayne, after a painful silence.

"If this academy wants to get rid of me," said the latter, "it will have to do so by sentence of a general court." Bill rose defiantly and straightened back his broad shoulders. "I 'll neither resign nor be found if I can help it."

"Let us put it to a vote," said Swayne. "Hardin declines to leave the academy of his own free will. Shall we, therefore, report the facts in his case to the commandant?"

One by one the lads cast their votes and with a feeling of unspeakable anxiety Douglas beheld the vote tied and his the deciding opinion.

He looked at the big yearling whom he had fought and defeated, the man who, in turn, had forced him to fight Swayne, who had done more than any other toward precipitating the regrettable outburst against law and authority, and he fully realized that Hardin should be dismissed from the academy; but on the question at issue, he was guilty of an evasion of the truth not quite a false official statement.

"Before voting," said Douglas, "I want to ask Hardin one question."

The big yearling waited breathlessly. "If you are not found in June, and after Sam Smoke's departure, will you go to the commandant and ask him for your explanation, and then in the presence of these cadets, indorse on it a full and truthful statement of what occurred that night on guard?"

Hardin's chest heaved like a bellows. The hemlock cup was at his lips and he could not evade it. "Yes, I'll do it," he said, and his eyes gleamed like an angered tiger's.

"Then," said Douglas, "I withhold my vote until the 12th of June."

CHAPTER XX

OFF ON FURLOUGH



THE parade in front of barracks was thronged with an eager assemblage. Men and women pressed up beneath the trees and surrounded the adjutant as he stood like a statue in front of the big battalion.

It was the 12th of June, a turning point in the life of every cadet who stood in the gray ranks. In the hands of the adjutant was the message which separated the "finds" forever from the Military Academy, while next to it was the order creating the new officers of the battalion. Gratification or humiliation, joy or sorrow, must come to nearly every individual of the command, while each class, as a body, stood on the brink of a great change in its history.

The plebes were to step out from the rear rank to assume the title of yearling and become the teachers of the hundred young men who were

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now speeding on to West Point to take the places thus left vacant. In addition, some among their number were to win the coveted chevrons, and experience in this honor the greatest thrill of joy in their military history.

The yearlings were to don the natty suits of "cits" which lay waiting in their rooms and leave the academy for two and one half months of glorious furlough, the only period of care-free days in all that four years of effort, to return finally and enter upon the last half of the contest for the goal of a life's ambition.

The second classmen were to succeed to the duties and obligations of the graduates who had departed in the preceding February, and whose places they were, in a measure, already filling.

To Douglas Atwell the occasion was momentous in the extreme, for not only did his own fate hang in the balance, but by that order in the adjutant's hands the agreement of Sam Smoke to fail in the examination must be fulfilled, while Hardin's future turned on the same official document. Though foremost in every agitation, loudest in censure, and severest in criticism, these two men had escaped all the consequences of their

acts. Five cadets had been summarily dismissed, six had been suspended for participation in the demonstration, and among them were some of the most respected lads of the corps; yet Hardin and Smoke, who had done more than any others to incite disorder, now enjoyed immunity because of lack of direct evidence. The hour of reckoning had come, however, for in Douglas Atwell's trunk lay all the evidence to be taken to the commandant's office at once if they failed to comply with the agreement with "the private committee of investigation."

Clear and distinct the adjutant's voice floated along the line and every ear was intent to catch the important words of the order.

"Headquarters United States Military Academy,
"West Point, N. Y., June 12th, —

"Special Orders,

"No. —

"1. The existing appointments of officers and non-commissioned officers in the Battalion of Cadets are hereby revoked.

"2. Upon the recommendation of the Commandant of Cadets, the following appointments of officers and non-commissioned officers in the Battalion of Cadets are announced to take effect immediately:—"

Then came the list of first class officers, and with a thrill of delight, Douglas heard Swayne's name at the very top of the list. The gallant little fellow was to be the senior captain of the corps.

Next followed the announcement of the adjutant and quartermaster, and Douglas waited eagerly for the list of second class officers. Great changes were possible among the chosen few, for the "investigation" had dragged many distinguished names in the dust, and exalted some that walked in lowly places. But the adjutant was reading:

"To be first sergeants: Cadets Barrett, Marley, Castle and King.

"To be sergeants: Cadets Wilson, Atwell, O'Connor, . . ."

Could it be possible? Again and again the names echoed through Douglas' brain, and his heart leaped with delight. He had won back his chevrons and so had Rory, and this when he believed himself on the black list of the Department of Tactics, disliked, and suspected of resistance to the policy of reform in hazing. Delightful

chills crept over his body, and left him almost trembling, for not only did this honorable distinction assure him of the confidence of his superior officers, but it was also a guarantee that he had successfully met the severest mental tests of the academic course. The future was full of hope, and in imagination he could see himself triumphantly winning the great goal of his life two years hence.

The adjutant had finished the list of cadet corporals and was reading on before Douglas caught the words of the order:—

“The following named cadets having been found deficient in their studies, will settle their accounts with the treasurer, and will then proceed to their homes without delay, there to await the action of the secretary of war in their cases:

“2nd Class.—Cadet Robert C. Jason.

“3rd Class.—Cadets William B. Hardin and Samuel Smoke.”

The compact had been fulfilled. Both Hardin and Smoke were gone. Forced to meet the issue and apply the wound with his own hand, Hardin could not face the consequences of hauling out that misleading explanation and laying

bare his deceit before the class. He had chosen to follow Smoke and drop forever out of the life of the corps of cadets.

As ranks broke, these two unfortunate fellows turned silently to their rooms to put away forever the old gray uniforms they had dishonored, while Douglas and Rory stood in the midst of a group of shouting, rejoicing friends, and gave vent to their uncontrollable feelings.

In a moment they were back in their room, laughing, dancing, almost shouting with delight at the unexpected termination of the year. Then they dashed across to the cadet store and received the gold lace chevrons which they had won so meritoriously.

Down upon the porch the trunks were hauled, and in brand new suits the two happy lads walked out into the area of barracks, free for the first time since they reported as "beasts" in the old eighth division.

"Let's watch the battalion go to dinner, Rory," said Douglas, with a laugh as they gathered up their dress suit cases and walked out in front of barracks.

Down past the Academic Building the trim

lines swept and as the enthusiastic fellows dashed up the steps of Grant Hall, Douglas and Rory joined them, shaking hands and giving and receiving congratulations. After a hasty but a happy dinner, the furloughmen trooped away to the railroad station and boat landing, and furlough had begun indeed.

Douglas and Rory had agreed to go down on the boat, so they walked out upon the pier to wait for the Mary Powell. Some fifty other furloughmen had already gathered and as the boat pulled into the wharf she was greeted with a cheer which rolled up to the top of old Fort Put and died away among the nooks and corners where revolutionary bullets had once left their marks.

Standing on the deck of the old boat which had seen so many furloughmen come and go, Douglas and Rory watched the gray turrets of the Academic Building fade away among the green-clad hills, and then Douglas spoke.

"I wonder how we ever got them back?" It was unnecessary to say that he referred to his chevrons.

"We had a friend at court," replied Rory. "I had an inkling that a pleasant surprise was in



**THEY WATCHED THE TURRETS
FADE AWAY**

store for us, but I thought it prudent to wait for the realization. I believe Captain Barton is responsible for our good fortune. He has a way of finding out things, and rumor has it that he made a little private investigation and discovered just where you stood on the subject of hazing. Up to that time, the Tactical Department believed that you fought Swayne because he was opposed to the anti-hazing policy. Now they know your motives.

"I am informed also that your famous speech at the last class-meeting got out around the post, and back you went on the list of sergeants. It would have been discourteous to leave me out, so I got in too. That 's how I got them back, but I never told you how I lost them."

Rory lay back on the railing and chuckled happily to himself. "The thing was almost too silly to tell, but too good to keep to myself.

"You see I had met a beautiful little femme from New York and we had enjoyed several glorious dances together. I was to drag her to the hop that fatal night, but along in the afternoon a telegram arrived announcing that she could not come but that she and her father would

be passing through West Point on the night train and she asked me if I could not come down 'in my carriage' to the railroad station so as to hear her apologies." Rory shook with laughter.

"Really, Dug.," said he, "I just could n't resist. I did n't happen to be going in carriages about that time, but at the risk of my chevrons I ran it out of camp and went down to the railroad station. I felt so ashamed of my weakness that I never told you before because I knew that a team of mules could not have dragged you into such an indiscretion for the most beautiful girl in the world."

Douglas flushed scarlet. Either Rory had no knowledge of that trip to Garrison with Swayne, or else he was enjoying a huge joke at Douglas' expense. The latter did not dare an attempt to find out which was true, but rather sought frantically for some excuse for changing the subject. "Let 's go and get a lot of the fellows together and have a rousing song," said he, with a sudden inspiration.

The two lads turned out and found themselves staring at Miss Alice Dryden and Charlotte Swayne.

"Why, Mr. Atwell," said Miss Dryden impulsively as she rushed forward and extended her hand, "I 've been looking all over the boat for you."

Douglas could scarcely speak, for the sting of that night was fresh in his memory when Miss Alice shrank away from him with the insinuation that he was a brute. He managed, however, to accept the proffered hand, and, thanks to Rory's dexterity, the group was soon seated together and chatting away without restraint.

"I heard that you were on the boat," said Miss Dryden as she gazed at Douglas with her large fearless eyes, "and I was determined to have another talk with you before you got away. Papa was going to New York so he came on the boat and we 're all going down with the jolly furloughmen."

She pushed her camp-chair over into the shadow of an awning, thus separating herself somewhat from Rory and Charlotte Swayne; then she took her seat, and with the frankness of a boy resumed:

"I wanted to apologize to you for the language I used when I met you that night in front of bar-

racks. Since then I have learned how the trouble came about and I really liked you very much for fighting as you did. It was horrible, though, and I hope there will be no more of it among the cadets."

"I think it is over for all of us, Miss Dryden," answered Douglas. "Hazing has gone for good and with it the principal cause of the fights. I earnestly hope that I will never have to fight again. I believe you were right—I was brutal to do it."

"Anyway, I have apologized and have been forgiven," she said with a very penitential look, "and we may therefore talk of something far more pleasant."

"Since that night in Cullom Hall," she went on, "I have been simply hungry for more of that story of your life in the Philippines. You remember it was interrupted by—by that man at the door.

"I have faithfully obeyed the order not to speak of it, but sometime I hope you will tell me the meaning of that strange occurrence. Those two men seemed utterly terrified at sight of you, but I won't let my curiosity get the better of me—that 's for the future."

Again Douglas felt a sensation of delight sweep over him, such a sensation as he had felt that night at Garrison when he heard Miss Alice express her disappointment at his supposed absence. It was a strange happiness for him to realize that his company gave pleasure to any one; it was still a deeper happiness to know that Miss Alice Dryden was the one who felt the pleasure. He thought of Swayne's interest in the beautiful girl, but put that thought from his mind—Miss Alice was interested, deeply interested indeed, but only in the romantic story he had to tell.

As if in response to his thoughts, Miss Alice continued,

"And now, Mr. Atwell, please tell me more about the Philippines."

She leaned against the railing, and waited for Douglas to begin. Her manner was that of an interested child asking for amusement and expecting ready compliance.

Douglas drew up his chair, and with a pleasure he had never known before, resumed the story of his thrilling experience in Luzon.

The landscape sped by unnoticed, the castles

of the Hudson were passed unseen; the Palisades hove into sight and yet these two talked on.

"It 's splendid to do things, Mr. Atwell," she said at length. "I would glory in the power to take a rifle on my shoulder and plunge through the swamps like the men, and fight and risk my life as you have done. I love to hear you tell of it, and then to live the whole scene over afterward in my thoughts."

As Miss Dryden finished speaking, Rory and Charlotte rejoined them and all four sat looking at the magnificent scenery.

"I hope you will visit West Point frequently, Miss Dryden," said Rory. "I take it for granted that Miss Swayne will come often to see her brother, and I hope you will find it possible to come too. Will you promise me some dances for the furlough hop on the 28th of August when we return to camp?"

Miss Dryden glanced up at him perplexedly. As yet there had been no arrangements for future hops, and the situation was a trifle awkward.

"I thought," continued Rory as he glanced at Douglas, "that you were coming for that hop. Miss Swayne has agreed to favor me that night

and perhaps—" Rory's eyes again turned mischievously toward Douglas and the latter was hanging on to the boat railing with the desperation of a drowning man. But he managed to maintain his composure and Rory nearly ruptured every muscle in his body trying to keep a straight face as Douglas said: "May I not accept your invitation to complete that story by taking you to the furlough hop, Miss Dryden?"

And Miss Alice bowed her pretty head and replied:

"I think Mr. O'Connor has earned those dances. I will try to come, Mr. Atwell."

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